

HARVESTING THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
THROUGH TRANSFORMING RAP AND HIP-HOP

A THESIS

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This work is dedicated to the Lord and savior Jesus Christ, who reconciled me to Him from the Cross. In addition, I would like to dedicate this to all the youth and young adults who feel an affinity to Rap and Hip-Hop genre and culture. Thank you for reminding me that every generation needs a place to express the edifying truth about the gospel through the gospel.

Also, to my parents Mose and Annie Parham whose sacrifices during the course of their life made a way for me to accomplish my dreams.

## CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
INTRODUCTION - THE PURPOSE OF THIS THESIS-PROJECT	1
CHAPTER ONE - THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING	7
Rap and Hip-hop: The Purpose of Inquiry and Introspection	10
The African Supernatural Endowment	13
Diaspora Blacks of the Reconstruction and the Musical Replica	15
Diaspora Blacks of Reconstruction and the “Primitive” or Traditional Blues	18
Integrated Diaspora Blacks with the “Classical” or “City” Blues	20
From “Classical” or “City” Blues to Rap and Hip-hop	21
Invasion of Rap and Hip-Hop and its Contemporary Destructive Image	23
Cause of the Disparaging Image of Rap and Hip-Hop	25
Thrusting Forward from the Truth of the Revelation	30
Rap and Hip-Hop as a Challenge	34
CHAPTER TWO-LITERATURE REVIEW	41
The Fifth Discipline	41
The Hip-hop Generation	43
Christ and Culture	43
City of God and City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church	46
To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City	49
Urban Ministry	52
Seek the Peace of the City	52
Transforming the City	55
A Prayer for the City	56
CHAPTER THREE - THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE	59
Place-A Theology of Place	61
The City as a Context for the Development of Urban Evangelism	61
Peace-A Theology of Peace	66
The Ministry of Urban Evangelism	66
The Biblical and Theological Perspective	70
Prayer-A Theology of Prayer	75
Spiritual Formation in an Urban Context	75
God is the Spirit	76
Summary	80

CHAPTER FOUR - PROJECT DESIGN	83
Analysis of the System	91
Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit Through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop	93
CHAPTER FIVE - ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS	105
The Chance for the Church's Future Survival	106
The Anticipated Project's Outcome	108
Determining the Project's Support	112
Impact on Holy Temple Church	120
Launching of the Project's "Rappers with Attitude" to the Roxbury Community	122
APPENDICES:	127
APPENDIX 1: Hexagon response to Question	127
APPENDIX 2: Hindrance response to Question	128
APPENDIX 3: Hexagon Clusters	129
APPENDIX 4: Hexagon Hindrance to Clusters	131
APPENDIX 5: Casual Loop Illustrations	133
APPENDIX 6: Sample Proposal	135
GLOSSARY	140
BIBLIOGRAPHY	142
VITA	153

1. Figure 1: The Anticipated Project's Outcome	108
2. Figure 2: Counterproductive developments	110
3. Figure 3: Redemptive approaches	111

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## **ABSTRACT**

The “Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” Initiative establishes and identifies the negative effects of Rap and Hip-Hop on youth and young adults while seeking a wise and practical way of downplaying the secular influence in the community. The initiative’s approach is biblically based on the theology, and then this initiative would be useful in not only attracting the community youth back into the Holy Temple Church (H.T C.), or other churches, but also in sustaining them in the Church.

This case study will include the preparatory process birthed as a part of the author’s journey as a Youth Minister in Roxbury, MA. Several of the youth and youth leaders were part of the process of discussing how rap music and hip-hop culture can be used to evangelize, unite, and encourage Holy Temple Church youth and young adults in a holistic Christian life of worship in their own communities. Hexagoning method taught in the first residency will be used to format the data of the case study and paper sections. A biblical theology of evangelism development for urban context will be overviewed to have accurate position in the biblical text for case study. Several resources will be utilized from several disciplines.



## INTRODUCTION

### THE PURPOSE OF THIS THESIS-PROJECT

We live in an era of instant gratification, a world of materialism in which it has become easier and easier for youths to doubt their faith. No community of faith is immune to the seed of doubt, including that of Christianity. According to an American Religious Identification Survey, a serious spiritual decline exists among young men and women in most churches throughout the United States.<sup>1</sup> In an effort to reverse these trends, Holy Temple Church of Roxbury, Massachusetts has been attempting to sustain young men and women in the church through a variety of efforts that include, but are not limited to, education programs and advocacy. Despite these proactive measures, most of the church youth and young adults leave Holy Temple Church for other churches or, sadly, cease to practice their faith altogether. A project called *Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop* aims to attract and sustain youth and young adult attendance and membership at the Holy Temple Church. By examining what allures youth and young adults away from the church and reframing it into a positive context, this program seeks to reverse spiritual decline by offering solace and a social understanding for the most part absent in other contemporary churches.

Situated in the Dudley Street neighborhood of Roxbury, the Holy Temple Church was founded and incorporated into the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on November 7, 1947. In order to obtain a larger space for worship, two churches (the Holy Temple

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<sup>1</sup> American-Religious-Identification-Survey.cuny.edu. <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/Faculty/GC-Faculty-Activities/ARIS> (accessed on December 30, 2011). National Opinion research Center's General Social Survey, 2004. While evangelicals remain just 7% of the adult population, it is expected that the number of Protestants soon will slip below 50% of the nation's population, thearda.com . <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/GSS.asp> (accessed on December 30, 2011).

Church and the United Holy Church Congregations) joined forces to purchase one larger auditorium that would enhance their ability to proclaim the gospel within the local community. This goal was achieved once the merger took place and the vibrant Holy Temple Church came into existence. During the leadership of Bishop James Sneed, the congregation moved from its original location at 150 Humboldt Avenue to the church's present building at 14 Lambert Avenue.

Bishop Sneed served as sole pastor to Holy Temple for thirty-four years until his death on May 5, 1981. His leadership led to many church initiatives aimed at aiding the Roxbury community as a whole, as well as others aimed specifically at helping the church's troubled youth and young adults. Elder Reason's Templates, a thirty-voice children's choir that sang for churches and civic groups all across New England, was one of the most successful initiatives under Sneed's ministry. Other programs under Sneed's ministry were chaplain activities in the Massachusetts Department of Corrections, networking, and leadership in rehabilitating drug and alcohol addicts through the *Christ Is the Answer Center* (CITA).

Holy Temple Church developed an impressive reputation for responding wisely and effectively to issues impacting the lives of people in the community. Under Elder Daniel Larson Reason's leadership from 1981 to 2005, the church grew and remained involved in many humanitarian activities, including youth and young adult enrichment programs. The church's current leader, Elder Thomas Williams, succeeded Elder Reason in June of 2005. The church now celebrates 60 years of continuing ministry in the city of Boston.

Despite the impressive growth and change experienced by the church, the number of congregants in the church is steadily declining. The majority of those who turn away from their Christian faith end up embracing secular culture, especially its booming and exciting music. Those who stay with the church are perceived as dull despite their attempts to remain lively, joyfully remaining true to their faith. In my own experiences and observations, these congregants only appear dull and indifferent inside the church; outside they are just as curious and attracted to the lures of boisterous music and the secular life. The rhythms of rap and hip-hop help youth and young adults drive away boredom and find personal release and this is especially true within the African American community of Roxbury.

The purpose of this research is to understand what exactly dispirits and disengages youth and young adults from the church, as well as to identify ways to captivate them and maintain their interest in their faith and the life of the church. This project seeks to discover and establish ways through which the power of the Holy Spirit and ecstasy inherent to church music can sustain and expand the church youth and young adults through Rap and Hip-Hop. Since it is not only musical taste that sustains youth and young adults in the church, this program seeks to discover other ways with which to promote practical living in accordance with the gospel and liveliness in communicating its word.

According to AWOE Magazine (2005-2008),<sup>2</sup> Christian musicians of the hip-hop generation associate secular music with drugs and violence, while music produced by African griots, gospel musicians, and 1970s artists is associated with struggles for

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<sup>2</sup> The Worlds Inspirational Entertainment Magazine, "Hip-Hop Spotlight: Lethal". Awoemagazine.com, <http://www.awoemagazine.com/musicr.html> (accessed on December 30, 2011).

liberation.<sup>3</sup> All of these artists harness the power of naturalness and ecstasy in their music; something that, traditionally, has been used to convey ethically and morally based messages.<sup>4</sup> “Naturalness...theory documents a remarkable convergence approach to synchronic and diachronic linguistics and points toward a de facto unification of logo file theories.”<sup>5</sup> Conscious of the influence of naturalness and ecstasy in music, modern secular musicians design their music such that it is lively and ecstatic enough to twist and hypnotize the unengaged church youth and young adults away from their Christian mindset and commitment. This is not to say that all secular Rap and Hip-Hop artists are focused solely on trying to lure the people who listen to their music away from God. However, it is the content and form in which secular artist music takes is direct conflict with God and God’s message. There is a huge dichotomy between secular music which usually pertaining to self-promotion, where non-secular music is all about glorifying God, it focuses on someone else rather than Id of each person. As a result, like most of the churches in Roxbury, secular influence has invaded the Holy Temple Church.

These youth and young adults not only struggle with finding spiritual fulfillment, so, too, do they struggle with socioeconomic problems and the need for basic services such as healthcare, education, food, shelter and clothing. These socioeconomic issues and youths’ lack of lively and joyful relationship in the church are hugely concerning. My personal observations within the community in several social situations have uncovered the following groups as those most impacted by these problems:

- Unemployed or semi-skilled, casually employed youth and young adults

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<sup>3</sup> Henry A. Rhodes, “The Evolution of Rap Music in the United States,” <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1993/4/93.04.04.x.html> (accessed on December 30, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The technologizing of the word* (London: Methuen and company, 1982), 49.

<sup>5</sup> Henning Andersen, *Naturalness and Markedness* (Amsterdam-Philadelphia, UCLA Publication 2008), 1.

- Young women, especially single mothers
- Disabled community members

The affected population also includes unemployed or underemployed adults, HIV/AIDS orphans, and widowers. These individuals are the most affected by these specific problems in that historically they have encountered huge socio-economic disparities. It is much easier for the secular music industry to target the ghetto, the mentality, and environment as a way of life to be emulated rather than being reviled. The premise of the ghetto is the notion quick and easy rather than accepting reality of long and hard.

All of the aforementioned issues are greatly influencing the church and its decline. One can conclude that the decline in church-going youth and young adults in addition to the inactiveness of the members left behind are threatening the future of the Holy Temple Church. It is believed that the severe negative economic stigmatization of the Roxbury community, which has been criminally hallmarked, is contributing in a way towards the decline. The socioeconomically struggling youth and young adults come to the church in search of not only appreciation and acceptance, but also psychological “vivacity and bliss” with hopes of escaping their troubled and unfulfilled lives. Unfortunately, those who walk out of the church doors without achieving that “vivacity and bliss” tend to succumb to the moral vices in their community.

The truth of the gospel may no longer hold any meaning unless the ministry is re-designed in a way that supports and sustains the engagement of youth and young adults within the church without compromising the truth and the culture of the gospel. A new model must instill the gospel’s core message while also motivating youth and young adults to follow a lively and more faithful path in life. By harnessing the power of

naturalness and ecstasy used by secular musicians, the church could counteract the pull of secular culture. The proposed program would use spontaneity and bliss in conjunction with teaching the living truth of the gospel within the lyrics to help Holy Temple Church in Roxbury retain youth and young adult community membership.

This paper will not only suggest a possible approach for the church to attract youth and young adults back to the church but also how to sustain them within the church itself. By strategically reaching out to and effectively caring for the youth and young adults, the church can achieve the valuable mission of serving as a continuing example of faith, strength, and unity, not only for its congregation but also for the surrounding community.

Through the course of this paper, I hope to answer the question, “How can rap music and hip-hop culture be used to unite and encourage Holy Temple Church youth and young adults towards a holistic Christian life and worship in their communities?” Supporting evidence will indicate that *Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop* can attract and sustain youth and young adult attendance and membership at the Holy Temple Church. By examining what allures youth and young adults away from the church and reframing these issues into a positive context, this program seeks to reverse spiritual decline by offering solace heretofore unavailable in contemporary churches.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING**

Roxbury, Massachusetts is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the City of Boston. It is home to a great number of parks, schools and churches. Originally a small agrarian community, industrialization, advancements in transportation and the resulting influx of residents transformed Roxbury into a center of manufacturing. The community's economy only seemed to strengthen with time as the Baby Boomer generation generated a total income for the Roxbury trade area that has been estimated in the millions. Clearly the Baby Boomer workforce was the driving factor behind Roxbury's economic progress in recent years; however, the torch is slowly being passed on to their children and grandchildren. Today's youths and young adults will find themselves in the positions of leadership that will determine the economic success of Roxbury in the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century. As this new generation's footing in the workforce grows even stronger, they are bound to encounter numerous challenges. I feel it to be imperative that we identify these upcoming challenges and develop the appropriate systems of support to ensure the success of future workforces and further bolster the economy of Roxbury.

In Boston, the 2003-2004 high school dropout rates for Black American students was two and a half times the rate of White students and, even worse, the Latino dropout rate was three times higher than that of their white counterparts<sup>1</sup>. Generally, student failure and academic underachievement are the root causes of other escalating urban problems like joblessness, lack of healthcare and inadequate housing. Many children do

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<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education (MADOE), The Dropouts in Massachusetts Public Schools report, Dropouts in Massachusetts Public Schools: 2003-04

not have access to the appropriate educational services, nor do they have access to an attorney to advocate for their educational rights.

Black Americans, the community's largest demographic, are the hardest hit by the inequitable criminal justice system. A recent analysis of Justice Department statistics has confirmed what most Black Americans have known to be true for years: the criminal justice system, the courts and the police have had a long-standing policy of arresting, prosecuting, and imprisoning Blacks (especially young Black men) at a rate hugely out of proportion to their percentage of the general population. Accordingly, one in ten Black Americans will find themselves behind bars as Roxbury enters the next millennium an eight-fold increase from three decades ago. Further emphasizing the racial disparity, the study reports the ratio of Black prisoners to White prisoners as having completely reversed since the 1950s.<sup>2</sup>

These challenges yield to other challenges like poverty, inability to afford higher education and unemployment. After World War II, when access to credit and government loans made homeownership affordable for the very first time, Black families were largely excluded by discriminatory practices such as redlining and racial steering. The financial impact of such racism remains readily apparent to this day. The *Boston Globe* reports that all of the aforementioned factors are directly linked to poverty among Blacks. Data released by the Census Bureau in 2005 confirmed that poverty within the Black community could be traced to implicit racism, the lingering effect of the blatant explicit racism of the past. Accordingly, throughout history it seems, most Blacks do not own homes simply because of racial disparity.

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<sup>2</sup> Boston Police Department, 2008 Crime Summary Report.  
[http://www.cityofboston.gov/Images\\_Documents/2008Crime%20Summary\\_tcm3-8952.pdf](http://www.cityofboston.gov/Images_Documents/2008Crime%20Summary_tcm3-8952.pdf). (accessed 16 August 2010).



In Roxbury, as is the case throughout the nation, homeownership is largely creating wealth for white, non-minority families and, thus, enabling them to live in good neighborhoods with well-funded, high-performing schools. A home is a huge source of equity and, as such, enables a family to fund higher education for their children. Higher education, in turn, leads to better employment opportunities and higher salaries. The homeownership rate among Blacks is generally very low and the resulting racial disparity in inheritable wealth (i.e. via home equity) is reflected in the Black population's lower rates of advanced degrees. This lack of income generation leaves most Blacks in Roxbury unemployed or underemployed. Lack of better employment, therefore, keeps widening the gap between Roxbury's poor and the rich, minority and white.

Another pressing issue is overt racism. While it was determined that segregation and discriminatory practices were unconstitutional with the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the sad truth remains that racism is a very real part of life, especially for Black Americans and Native Americans.<sup>3</sup> Though a component of America's liberal movements have tried to remedy the problem, these racial disparities are too deeply rooted within our nation's social and economic structure to be fixed by simple social programs. While these programs were developed with the best of intentions, they sometimes lead to harming the very people they were intended to help. Therefore, the church in Roxbury should not only be responding to the community challenges in general, but should also be working on both fighting racism and sustaining the strength of Roxbury's Black community through stable families. The church, a traditionally

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<sup>3</sup> The Native Americans are more segregated and kept in reservations  
[http://everything2.com/title/African+American+and+Native+American discrimination from 1864 to 1954](http://everything2.com/title/African+American+and+Native+American+discrimination+from+1864+to+1954).  
(accessed 16 August 2010).

empowering and influential source of community support, could prove itself instrumental in aiding the Black community of Roxbury.

### **Rap and Hip-hop: The Purpose of Inquiry and Introspection**

Rapping is a powerful form of artistic communication that was deeply engrained in African culture long before colonialism, not to mention today's popular rap culture. Africans 'rapped' work songs, lullabies, battle songs, and religious music with an aim of expressing life and all of its complex facets through the medium of sound.<sup>4</sup> The colonial period, however, remains unique in that it witnessed the original use of music as a tool for community empowerment and liberation.<sup>5</sup>

The origins of secular rap and hip-hop music (among other genres) can be traced to Africa where endowed artists practiced the craft of comforting, stimulating, and inspiring the oppressed through music. Today, however, secular music is widely viewed by many as Devil's music.<sup>6</sup> According to the words of Phil Jackson, "Hip-hop is here to stay," and its negative image is prospering.<sup>7</sup> The evolution from such a positive, supportive force to a perceived social perversion makes hip-hop and rap music an interesting area of study. Today both of these music genres are strongly embraced by youths, yet it is feared that they have a negative influence on their young and impressionable fans. The Church, historically a highly influential institution within the

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<sup>4</sup> Bush, Barbara Jean. African Echoes, "Modern Fusions: Caribbean Music, Identity and Resistance in the African Diaspora." publisher.com, [http://h06.cgpublisher.com/proposals/459/index\\_html](http://h06.cgpublisher.com/proposals/459/index_html) (accessed June 14, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Bush, Barbara Jean. African Echoes. "Modern Fusions: Caribbean Music, Identity and Resistance in the African Diaspora", New Directions in Humanities. cgpublisher.com. [http://h06.cgpublisher.com/proposals/459/index\\_html](http://h06.cgpublisher.com/proposals/459/index_html). Internet (accessed June 14, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> *The Post*, Hip-Hop as The Devil's Music. Thursday, October 30, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson, "*The Hip-hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture*," Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005, Back Cover.

community, should take special care to uproot any such ‘dark side’ of modern secular music and its culture. The Church should use its revered place within the community and brainstorm ways to keep youths involved in houses of faith rather than drawn away from it by New Age culture. It must develop a practical and effective way to sustain youth involvement and belief in the Church itself and, most importantly, in Christ. There is a need to identify, acknowledge, explain, and further develop a community bond that encourages positive thinking, strengthens spirituality, and promotes healthy life choices and morality among youths and young adults both inside and outside of the Church. To achieve such goals, the Church must invest time and effort into critically analyzing and, thus, thoroughly understanding the negative influences of rap and hip-hop along with the genres’ positive cultural roots.

Guided by Peter M. Senge’s concept of systems thinking as explained in *The Fifth Discipline*,<sup>8</sup> we begin by critically tracing the origins of rap and hip-hop and their development into modern-day secular rap and hip-hop. According to Don C. Ohadike in his book *The Sacred Drums of Liberation*, the five most universally popular musical forms—Jazz, Blues, Rhythm and Blues (R&B), Rock, and Rap—all have their roots in Africa.<sup>9</sup> In *Pan-African Culture of Resistance*, Ohadike asserts that the history of black people in Africa is connected to the history of the black people in the Diaspora of years of enslavement.<sup>10</sup> Through his investigation we learn how the concepts of rapping

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<sup>8</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The heart and Practice of Learning Organizations* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Don C. Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation: Religious and Music of Resistance in Africa and the Diaspora* (Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2002), 179.

<sup>10</sup> Don C. Ohadike, *Pan-African Culture of Resistance: A History of Resistance Movements in Africa and the Diaspora* (Binghamton, England: Global Publications, 2002), 10.

(breaking), hiping (styling) and hopping (springing/jumping) evolved prior to emancipation and human rights movements. Ohadike explains:

Slave emancipation in America, the abrogation of racial segregation in the United States, and the granting of political independence to black people in Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere could not have been achieved without the Pan-African culture of resistance which started in Africa before it was forged by other black resistance movements elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

According to Ohadike, the most influential factor behind Pan-African culture was that of African spirituality through musical expression.<sup>12</sup> Just like their predecessors, Pan-African musicians used religion, music and dance in their struggle for liberation from all forms of oppression. In other words, music was a tool for creating positive change: social justice and emancipation.

The very first Negro spirituals were inspired by African music even if the tunes were not far from those of hymns. Some of them, which were called “shouts”, were accompanied with typical dancing including hand clapping and foot tapping. Some African American religious singing at this time was referred to as a “moan” (or a “groan”). Moaning (or groaning) does not imply pain. It is a kind of blissful rendition of a song, often mixed with humming and spontaneous melodic variation.<sup>13</sup>

According to Ohadike, blacks’ disbursement across the globe created a social unrest through the Africans’ use of religion, music, and dance, as their culture could not have survived five hundred years of colonial culture, violence, and economic exploitation.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Paris, France. Negro Spirituals, <http://www.negrospirituals.com/> (accessed 14 June 2011).

<sup>14</sup> France, *Negro Spirituals*, 2.

## **The African Supernatural Endowment**

Ohadike goes on to explain that supernatural forces permeated through the sound of African drums, soothing, thrilling, and inspiring the oppressed Africans with a sense of courage, empowerment and the determination for liberation. The drums were consecrated in order to endow them with god-like, supernatural attributes.<sup>15</sup> Once blessed, these sacred African drums were believed to speak in deep and divine tongues, relaying powerful messages to any who listened. The process of consecration involved intercessory prayer and an offering to the Holy Spirit. The usage of intercessory prayer rather than thanksgiving pray or corporate pray is when one or two touch and agree to pray on behalf of someone or something then they are intervening on behalf of the situation with the understanding that everyone is acting together as a team.

The British Royal Niger Company's uninvited visit to the Nigerian village of Illah demonstrates the powerful nature of the divine drums. The ominous beat of the sacred drums took on the ancestral tongue, warning the villagers of the invasion and, thus, allowing them to flee. A Roman Catholic priest who understood Igbo culture reported the mystery of the drums, stating, "Early on the morning of that fateful day trumpets and war *tam-tams* [drums] were heard on all sides, leaving no room for doubt as to their meaning; and the rebels poured into Illah from every side. The mission buildings were destroyed."<sup>16</sup>

As the events of Illah suggest, the safety of the African people could be viewed as directly related to the African religious experience and, in turn, was dependent upon the rhythmic music and drum beats that summoned said religious experiences. The music and

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<sup>15</sup> France, *Negro Spirituals*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation* , 88-90

rhythm did not dictate the survival music, but rather without the other they would not achieve the same intended purpose. Ohadike asserts that only sacred instruments like drums could speak the language of the spirit and, therefore, induce spirit-possession (or, as is commonly said, summon the divinities to mount their horses to the worshippers). Furthermore, he explains that it was difficult (if not impossible) for devotees to experience spirit-possession without the assistance of music.<sup>17</sup> Ohadike's fellow experts on the African religious experience are in agreement. John K. Thornton, for example, writes that, "Apart from using drums and music to communicate danger, Africans used drums and music to appeal for God's intervention in their oppressed situations and demand their rights from their oppressors."<sup>18</sup> Historically, native Africans held firmly to their traditional religious beliefs that revered both the divinities and music as sacred and powerful.

For instance, the Mau Mau warriors of Kenya refused to ignore the potential power of music and religion as they fought for freedom from Britain in the 1940s and 50s. The Mau Mau uprising led Kenyans to national independence in 1964.<sup>19</sup> The success of the Mau Mau was due, in part, to their use of politically charged songs as tools of empowerment and uprising. Ironically, these songs combined traditional African religious music with the Christian hymns of their oppressors. In their music, they made use of supernaturally gifted musicians who, by "rapping" the spoken word rhythmically, increased awareness of colonial oppression and encouraged the oppressed to take

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<sup>17</sup> Ohadike, *Pan-African Culture of Resistance*, 88-90.

<sup>18</sup> John K. Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (October 1991): 1112.

<sup>19</sup> Thornton, *African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion*, 144-145.

action.<sup>20</sup> “Rapping” was the Africans’ (griots’) way of expressing ideas (i.e. stating truths and complaints) by uttering words sharply while, simultaneously, swiftly striking a drum or other percussion instrument. In other words, it was the emceeing (or, if you prefer, the MCing, spitting, or just rhyming) of the day.

### **Diaspora Blacks of the Reconstruction and the Musical Replica**

Oppressed Blacks outside of Africa, most notably slaves, continued their ancestral tradition of ‘rapping’ to demand rights and fight oppression. The pain of the slave experience was new and unique and, as such, required an equally profound and unique twist upon the traditional African music. In the process of the reconstruction and fight for freedom, they considered the replication of their African way of expression through music, resulting in Negro spirituals.<sup>21</sup>

Their preferred form of expression, of course, was music. Regardless of where this form of musical expression appeared, it maintained its persistent and courageous demand for freedom from oppression. The result was the creation and evolution of various musical genres familiar to the modern world. For example, the Candomble resistance and the Capoeirista musicians of Brazil expressed their discontent through their newly created musical techniques.<sup>22</sup> In Trinidad, Calypso and steel band music were used in the struggle for a national identity and in agitation for political

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<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Pollard. BBC News “One Minute World News”, BBC News Africa. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3622406.stm>. (accessed 14 June 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “Negro Spirituals,” *The Atlantic* (June, 1867).

<sup>22</sup> Mestre Camisa’s, ABADÁ-Capoeira. <http://www.abadacapoeiraisrael.com/en/content.php?id=64>. (accessed 14 June 2011). Capoeira is a 400-year-old martial art that blends music, dance, singing, and acrobatics to create a holistic approach to teaching self-defense. Originating in Africa, Capoeira was brought to Brazil by captured slaves from Angola. Because of their predicament, these enslaved people had to disguise their training as recreational song and dance.

independence.<sup>23</sup> While Jamaican Rastafarians used Reggae to communicate their pain and call for freedom, the United States had black slaves singing Negro spirituals and blues to ease their pain and preserve their history.<sup>24</sup> Put succinctly, musical expression was seen as a means for communicating discontent and, thereby, speaking out against oppression.

Of all these examples, Brazilian lyrics of Capoeira may sound most interesting. A Dead Prez album provides a powerful example of typical Capoeira lyrics intending to heal the spirit of the suffering and instill a sense of determination in the fight for freedom.

**Call:** I was born in poverty (*naci dentro da pobreza*)

**Response:** but not of a poor race (*nao nace raca pobrein*)

In the above format, a soloist highlights an issue pertinent to the audience members who, in turn, provide a response. Both the soloist's call and the group's response were intended to contain a profound (though slightly disguised) truth that would be conveyed to the community through song.<sup>25</sup>

According to Ohadike, whatever method used by Diaspora blacks in their struggle for human justice, they never lost sight of the potency of their African religion and music.<sup>26</sup> African religion, music and dance unified the African exiles in America. For instance, black American slaves, having been pulled together from different parts of Africa where they might have been divided in tongue and worship and tribal warfare, were united by singing and worship, giving them a new sense of belonging and a

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<sup>23</sup>Janette Beckman, *Rap: Portraits and Lyrics of a Generation of Black Rockers* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), xviii.

<sup>24</sup>Joshua Rosenthal. "Blackpraxis," Ohio State.  
<http://www.ohio.edu/aas/blackpraxis/articles/Joshua%20Rosenthal.pdf>. (accessed 14 June 2011).

<sup>25</sup>Joshua Rosenthal, "Blackpraxis." Ohio State.  
<http://www.ohio.edu/aas/blackpraxis/articles/Joshua%20Rosenthal.pdf>. (accessed 14 June 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 100.



meaningful identity as one large African family in America. According to Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak in *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were*, the artists set the mood and controlled both the spirit and the movements of the people under divine possession.<sup>27</sup> It is through music that the spiritually mediated and musically possessed blacks overcame fear of death by their oppressors. They were excited into a state of great courage and determination to persist with patience in their call for freedom. Through such inspiration, death under oppression was viewed as the same thing as making a spiritual journey to Africa where the black ancestral spirit lives in freedom.<sup>28</sup> Ohadike explains that religion; music and dance helped the displaced Africans cope with their pain and longing to return to their native land. It is my belief that many other ethnic communities have found a redeeming essence in music, in one way or another. However, from my own personal experience the African rhythm in music resonates more. Furthermore, he asserts that without their deeply engrained religious and musical identity, the initial problems typical to displaced peoples (e.g. language differences) would have been extremely difficult to overcome.

Also worth noting is that where instruments were unavailable, the spiritually inspired artists used their bodies to communicate musically. For instance, when slave owners and government officials in America outlawed certain types of drumming and verbal expressions, blacks used dance and body movements as alternative means of communication. Ohadike cites the development of *Samba* and gumboot dancing as examples.<sup>29</sup> Music was also used as a form of record keeping. Both popular and

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<sup>27</sup> Douglas T Miller and Marion Nowak, *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977), 183.

<sup>28</sup> Mitchell S. Laguerre, *Voodoo Heritage*, (New York, New York: Three Rivers press, 1992), 30.

<sup>29</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 11.

religious music were regarded as forms of bodily writing. According to Barbara Browning, dance as an element in music was therefore text, a form of cultural inscription that one can learn to imprint via the body.<sup>30</sup> As other scholars have asserted, music was not only a primary instrument of survival, but also an exercise of the imagination that proved to be the best guarantee for survival, from the days of slavery to the post-colonial period.<sup>31</sup>

### **Diaspora Blacks of Reconstruction and the “Primitive” or Traditional Blues**

This African-based, Blues religious musical expression survived five hundred years of white violence. Survived the white man’s attempt to destroy or appropriate resisting black slaves and their artistic forms of expression. Emancipation was, undeniably, a blessing, but it also had negative effects. More specifically, it resulted in the decentralization of the Southern-based black community and the abrupt integration of said community into a new world even more complex and uncertain than that of enslavement. The comfort found from fellow slaves in work gangs with work songs, spirituals and field hollers became a thing of the past. Post-emancipation blacks were thrown into a new and distressing world and were in need of encouragement, excitement and empowerment. They struggled with intense loneliness and solitary hardship. Fortunately, the changes that accompanied the post-emancipation social and cultural complexities eventually lead to the birth of the “primitive” (or traditional) Blues. According to Tilford Brooks, the black community’s inability to gain true freedom

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<sup>30</sup> Barbara Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), xxii.

<sup>31</sup> Rex M. Nettleford, *Dance Jamaica: Cultural Definition and Artistic Discovery: the National Dance Theater Company of Jamaica, 1962-1983* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 20.

created a psychological atmosphere that helped establish and propel the development of Blues music.<sup>32</sup>

Scholars studying the origin of rap music have concluded that the Blues developed out of the slave work songs, spirituals and field hollers, all of which had their roots in African traditions.<sup>33</sup> The consensus is that the Blues date back to the era of emancipation and the Reconstruction (1861-1877). Though, scholars remain unsure as to the exact time of the Blues' detachment from its antecedents.<sup>34</sup> Ohadike explains that some scholars believe the schism took place early in the nineteenth century, while others point to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Most scholars do agree, however, that the emancipation period played an important role in the emergence of the Blues as a distinct musical form.<sup>35</sup> This development, in turn, led to the emergence of Jazz, which was derived from the admixture of Blues, spirituals and Voodoo sacred drums, all maturing before 1913.

Both the Blues and Jazz provided African Americans with numerous opportunities to earn a livelihood. While both offered earning potential, the Blues remained the preferred genre. Bands of newly emancipated street musicians developed and flourished in cities everywhere, with New Orleans being the most attractive city because of the proliferation of traditional Blues.<sup>36</sup> In fact, in New Orleans, classical Blues interfaced with certain voodoo and Black spiritual music to produce a third genre: rock music.

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<sup>32</sup> Tilfrord Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984), 42-43.

<sup>33</sup> Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage*, 42-43.

<sup>34</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 179.

<sup>35</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 177.

<sup>36</sup> John Rublowsky, *Black Music in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 122.

### **Integrated Diaspora Blacks with the “Classical” or “City” Blues**

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the diverse sociological and musical influences of American society as a whole began to seep into the styling of black musicians. In order to become musically acclimatized to American society, they transformed their “primitive” or “traditional” Blues into what was described as “classical” or “city” Blues in the 1920s.<sup>37</sup> Unlike the traditional Blues, which generally expressed a black person’s loneliness and isolation, classical Blues expressed black pain and frustration in a new and changing world. While the traditional Blues occupied a private domain, the classical Blues held sway in the public sphere. During the First World War, many blacks migrated to northern cities like Chicago, Detroit, and New York in search of better economic opportunities. This migration was a blessing in disguise, opening up opportunities with recording companies that had started producing music for the black market, thus developed the golden age of classical Blues.

The economy was booming and the Blues enjoyed explosive popularity. The economic and musical prosperity came to a sudden halt with the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929. Though the aftermath of the Second World War could not resurrect the black golden age of classical Blues, it witnessed the emergence of contemporary rhythm and blues (R&B). However, Ohadike argues, that despite the decline of the golden age of classical Blues, the “Blues never lost its emphasis on the social and cultural messages that it always tried to convey through its unique lyrical patterns.”<sup>38</sup> For instance, classic Blues singers like Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith retained many aspects of the country Blues in their music as is apparent in their twelve-bar, three-line structure,

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<sup>37</sup> Brooks, *America’s Black Musical Heritage*, 56-58.

<sup>38</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 178.

their use of antiphonal accompaniments, and (especially in the case of Ma) in their rough-voiced moans, slurs, and blue notes. One of Ma Rainey's classic Blues pieces went like this:

Many days of sorrow, many nights of woe,  
Many days of sorrow, many nights of woe,  
And a ball and chain, everywhere I go.<sup>39</sup>

### **From “Classical” or “City” Blues to Rap and Hip-hop**

Rap preceded hip-hop in its evolution from “classical” or “city” Blues. However, unlike traditional Blues and classical Blues, the contemporary Blues and R&B exhibited little resistance-based messaging. The post-World War era stifled most artistic protests until the second half of the 1950s when the Civil Rights Movement began. Blues and R&B were musically influential in the development of other genres like *Reggae* and American country music. However, the integrated black artists could no longer monopolize contemporary Blues and R&B as they had done during the era of classical Blues. According to Brooks, some white artists challenged and attracted by the black artists' music took advantage of the black artists' economic instability and began to imitate the black artists' Blues.<sup>40</sup> Some of the imitators' songs were taken from the original compositions of black Blues artists who received little to no recognition or financial reward for their efforts and creativity.<sup>41</sup> Such white imitators include, but are by

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<sup>39</sup> Bessie Smith. The Classic Blues and the women who sang them. “Wild Women Don't Have the Blues”, calliope.org. <http://www.calliope.org/blues/blues2.html>. (accessed 14 June 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage*, 185.

<sup>41</sup> Brooks, *America's Black Musical Heritage*, 185.

no means limited to, Elvis Presley, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Animals, and Eric Clapton.<sup>42</sup>

Black artists once again rose into the spotlight with the birth of rap, which, according to musician and researcher Bakari Kitwana, dates back to 1965. Kitwana asserts that rap, a modified version of R&B, underpinned hip-hop in the late 1970s.<sup>43</sup> Cheryl L. Keys argues that hip-hop began to resonate within the black ghetto, initially with Joseph Saddler (Grandmaster Flash) in 1974 in South Bronx, New York, and was later copied by other youths in the New York area.

Saddler and other New York rappers and hip-hop artists aimed at inciting a reaction to the decay of the Bronx due to middle class outmigration.<sup>44</sup> As a result, black musicians rapped about the crisis of inner-cities and their deteriorating class and race relations, along with the increase of junkies, hustlers, derelicts, bag ladies and suicide.<sup>45</sup> These artists began to dominate R&B and moved to the forefront of a movement that used rap and hip-hop as instruments of protest.<sup>46</sup> While their music's most obvious success was sheer entertainment, Jeff Chang explains that the artist's true aim was to expose the ills of contemporary society.<sup>47</sup> In fact, researchers like Brian Cross testify that rapping was part of the social fabric of black America since the day English became a language of the slaves.<sup>48</sup> Like their ancestral griots in Africa, they used their highly

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<sup>42</sup> Erica D. Block, *Race & Rock & Roll: A Visual Analysis of Rolling Stone Cover Photography*. Colby College Publishing: 2010

<sup>43</sup> *Race & Rock & Roll: A Visual Analysis of Rolling Stone Cover Photography* Erica D. Block

<sup>44</sup> Cheryl L. Keys, "At the Cross Roads: Rap Music and the African Nexus," *Ethnomusicology*, 40, no. 2, (Spring-Summer, 1996): 226-229.

<sup>45</sup> Arnold Shaw, *Black Popular Music in America: From the Spirituals, Minstrels, and Ragtime to Soul, Disco, and Hip-Hop* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1966), 293.

<sup>46</sup> Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York, Thunder's Mouth Press, Avalon Publishing Group, 2005), 28-29.

<sup>47</sup> Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 28-29.

<sup>48</sup> Brian Cross, *It's Not Salary: Rap, Race, and Resistance in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1993), 3.

developed speech skills, not always praising as rappers but often admonishing and ridiculing. In addition, the griots, artists of the Reconstruction Era, the Integration Era, and the 1970s all kept records of historical text and used music as a weapon in their fight for justice.<sup>49</sup> For instance, Sylvia Robinson's thrilling Sugar Hill Records of New Jersey climbed the pop charts in 1979 with the hit "Rappers Delight, which was social commentary of the current social and cultural environment."<sup>50</sup>

### **The Invasion of Rap and Hip-Hop and its Contemporary Destructive Image**

Towards the end of the 1970s America moved to what Bakari calls a new American economy that made all Americans socio-economically insecure, regardless of race and class.<sup>51</sup> The practice of outsourcing low-skilled manufacturing jobs had become commonplace. National unemployment rates skyrocketed, particularly among Black youth. According to Shaw, a minimum wage job for many in the hip-hop generation could hardly allow them to make ends meet in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>52</sup> As technology advanced, black labor decreased. Black labor, something that America had depended upon for more than 350 years, was quickly becoming obsolete with the computerization of American industry.

Racial warfare began and the racially marginalized blacks were fighting back from within the ghettos where the hip-hop generation faced the oppression of police brutality alongside the daily injustices of poverty, unemployment and inferior education.

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<sup>49</sup> Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music* (London: John Calder, 1987), 391.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold Shaw. *Black Popular Music in America: From the Spirituals, Minstrels, and Ragtime to Soul, Disco, and Hip-Hop*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1966), 292.

<sup>51</sup> Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2002), 25-49.

<sup>52</sup> Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation*, 34-35.

Feelings of discontent ran high and, far more than any other generation; the hip-hop generation became synonymous with drugs and crime as a means to drown their hopelessness and rage. Many of those who were pushed out of the mainstream economy took refuge in street gangs. Selling drugs like cocaine was one of the most viable “job” options in the face of limited meaningful, well-paying employment.<sup>53</sup> Gangs and drug business became almost synonymous with blacks. Ironically, higher rates of monthly drug use were reported among whites, but the numbers did not stop police and lawyers from insisting on more concentrated policing in Black communities.

As the annual number of cocaine-related criminal cases increased, so, too, did the focus on Black crime in center cities, a racial bias highlighting America’s fear of the “black criminal.” In 1982, Joseph Saddler (who had collaborated with Robinson’s Sugar Hill Gang) released the hit “The Message,” which transformed hip-hop into an even more powerful, widespread vehicle for daring and sharp social commentary. Though Saddler and Robinson continued to rap and experience commercial success, not all recognized the potential of the growing industry as they maintained the traditional form and purpose of rapping. The work of later musicians like Joe Simmons, Darryl McDaniell, Jason Mizell, and their Orange Crush is argued to have given birth to one of rap’s most prevalent periods today, and almost became a genre in its own right. While critics have yet to reach an official consensus, many assert that this trio is responsible for the birth of modern hip-hop.<sup>54</sup> Although the current trend in modern hip-hop has become a highly

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<sup>53</sup> The Controlled Substances Act of 1970. According to D. Musto, *The American Disease*, at 3, whites continued to use cocaine even after the Congress prohibited cocaine use in 1970, classifying it as a Schedule II controlled substance, meaning it was potentially susceptible to abuse and could produce dependency despite its legitimate medicinal uses.

<sup>54</sup> Alex Ogg and David Upshal, *The Hip-Hop Years: The History of Hip Hop*. England, UK: Channel 4 Books.



refined art form from its predecessor involving poetic wordplay and subtle musical compositions, it is also often associated with advertisement of corporate products, drugs, thugs, vandalism, violence and various other negative activities.<sup>55</sup>

According to Bakari, commercialization of Rap music expanded the definition of the hip-hop culture beyond its initial graffiti, break dancing, dj-ing, and lyrical rapping. There was inclusion of verbal language, body language, attitude, style, and fashion.<sup>56</sup> By the early 1990s, the rap and hip-hop music industry had changed entirely and was entering the world of “gangster rap,” a new form of secular music that would shake the world. Niggers with Attitude (NWA) were the new group and they were the unapologetic, violent, and sexist pioneers who, in many ways, became synonymous with old-school rap. Most of their lyrics implied violence. In fact, according to a 1989 report by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, NWA rapping was associated with the encouragement of gang rape, pedophilia, oral sex, cop killing and prostitution.<sup>57</sup>

### **Cause of the Disparaging Image of Rap and Hip-Hop**

Commenting on the destructive trend in rap and hip-hop, Ohadike dismisses any claim that rap is all about demand for freedom from oppression. He sees much of what is happening in rap and hip-hop music today as veering far off course from the original purpose of rap and hip-hop. Ohadike cites the endeavors of the music industry as “capitalism driven” despite joblessness and poverty among many blacks.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/news/tv--radio/word-up-mate> December 3, 2007

<sup>56</sup> Bakari, *The Hip Hop Generation*, 8.

<sup>57</sup> Steve Hochman, “Compton rappers versus the letter of the law: FBI claims song by n.w.a. advocates violence on police 1989, October 5”, *articles.latimes.com*. [http://articles.latimes.com/1989-10-05/entertainment/ca-1046\\_1\\_law-enforcement](http://articles.latimes.com/1989-10-05/entertainment/ca-1046_1_law-enforcement) (accessed on December 30, 2011).

<sup>58</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 181.

Ohadike asserts that, “Perpetrators of this type of music are motivated by the quest for money,” and, therefore, care very little about the central purpose of rap and hip-hop music.<sup>59</sup> Though many feel (at least, subconsciously and through idolization) that those rappers, like the African *insongoma*, are supernaturally and spiritually endowed, they have lost sight of the original intent of rap music. Ohadike explains the intended aim of rapping as promoting freedom from political, economic, socio-cultural, and religious oppression; but, instead of addressing social evils and injustice through music, modern performers of rap and hip-hop have allowed themselves to be swayed by the contemporary multinational corporations who aim at accumulating wealth through any means. These corporations make sensual, unnecessary and, often, overly expensive goods and expect their products to be promoted and bought.

Having been caught in a sales-driven corporate culture, the perpetrators of this type of music become sidetracked, thus glorifying sex, drugs, violence and an ostentatious lifestyle. In his observation of popular culture and the visibility of black youth, Bakari explains that black youth identify rap music, videos, clothing, films, and television programs as their own personal values and sense of self.<sup>60</sup> As such, any analysis of the root cause of rap and hip-hop’s negative image requires a detailed examination of the role of corporations, messaging and marketing.

Although the corporations are the manufacturers and suppliers of the products highly revered and consumed by our youth, these corporations remain individualistic and capitalistic. Executives pursue their personal happiness and independence without considering the best interest of their consumers, especially the unemployed or

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<sup>59</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 181.

<sup>60</sup> Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation*, 7-8.

underemployed youth. The United States Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom accurately describes the single-mindedness of big business, explaining that courts have given corporations the basic constitutional rights of persons, but workers lose those rights on entering the workplace.<sup>61</sup>

Possessing control over social trends and the national economy, corporations turn a deaf ear to the cry of troubled youths, leaving the government and charitable organizations (like churches) to address the social issues perpetrated by their corporate machine. Unfortunately, addressing the concerns of youth with social outreach programs creates a systemic problem; the same corporations who could not care less about the life of their customers, influence not only society but also our government. Despite warnings by presidents and economists, the World Trade Organization effectively gives corporations veto power over our nation's environmental and labor laws, hence weakening the people's rights to protect themselves and their property through legislation.<sup>62</sup>

The influence of these individualistic and capitalistic forces on the otherwise therapeutic, prophetic, and educative genres of rap and hip-hop are readily apparent in corporate mergers (particularly media and advertisement in the public sphere) and the misuse of rappers and the hip-hop generation to sell products. Although corporations like AT&T, The Gap and Levi's have helped rap artists soar musically into popular culture, this success has proven to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, corporations have contributed to the popularity of young black artists; but, on the other hand, corporations

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<sup>61</sup> WILPF. "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom", wilpf.org. <http://www.wilpf.org/>. (accessed 15 June 2011).

<sup>62</sup> WILPF. "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom," wilpf.org. <http://www.wilpf.org/>. (accessed 15 June 2011).

have abused the success of rap and hip-hop culture for their own personal advancement. The artists have become puppets for product sales, thereby falling victim to the very same materialistic world they promote.

According to Bakari, global corporations (with the help of global institutions like World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Bank) have created immense wealth, further concentrated in the hands of the few, and escalated the widening division between the poor and the rich. Furthermore, he explains that the mega corporations are fueled by cutting-edge digital technology, thus influencing the lives of the world's population through their own interpretation of commerce. Corporate domination does not end here; rather, the success and growth of mega corporations are fueled by international trade agreements like NAFTA (North America Free Trade Agreement) and GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). "This great contrast between the positive and negative outgrowths of this global economy heavily influences the values, lifestyles, and worldview of young Blacks."<sup>63</sup>

Additionally, both black and white rappers and hip-hoppers suffer from persisting segregation and public policy that have clear social implications in America. Ironically, persistent segregation and racist public policy go against the American ideals of democracy and equality.<sup>64</sup> Corporations have only served to further the racial divide through their monopoly on the media business, misrepresenting the young black rap and hip-hop generation in a negative light. Bakari provides a perfect example of media

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<sup>63</sup> Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation*, 11-15.

<sup>64</sup> Ohadike, *Sacred Drums of Liberation*, 179.

distortion when he writes: “Though the vast majority of drug users have been white, the people doing drugs on TV [are] now blacks and Hispanic.”<sup>65</sup>

The overall shift in quality of life for young Blacks during the 1980s and 1990s appears to have been taken for granted. However, according to Kitwana, the growth of youth street gangs in the rap and hip-hop generation (which some experts say form primarily to sell drugs) was a product of the 1980s and 1990s socio-economic shift in the quality of life for young blacks.<sup>66</sup> Some of the songs released by the distressed artists are as vulgar as what we see in American TV comedies, Hollywood movies and other entertainers today.

*F-- the Police*, by Niggaz Wit Attitudes (NWA), states:  
F--the Police commin' straight from the underground  
A young n--got it bad 'cause I am brown  
And not the other color  
Some Police think  
They have authority to kill a minority  
F--that sh--'cause I ain't the one  
For a punk motherf--er with a badge and a gun.<sup>67</sup>

Recurrent phrases like “F--the police” and “F--that sh--” truly portray a morally ruined person. On the other hand, phrases such as “because I am brown,” “not the other color,” and “some police think they have authority to kill” reveal the probable root cause of said moral ruin. Recognizing this dichotomy is critical to understanding modern rap and hip-hop; it reveals the importance of focusing on the cause of rap and hip-hop’s negative image rather than the disparaging image itself.

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<sup>65</sup> Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation*, 18.

<sup>66</sup> Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation*, 20.

### **Thrusting Forward from the Truth of the Revelation**

Considering the aforementioned literature, it is reasonable to conclude that the Blues developed out of slave work songs, spirituals and field hollers, all of which traced their roots to traditional African music.<sup>67</sup> It is obvious that the initial purpose of rap and hip-hop music was positive in nature, inspiring black society through its uplifting, educating, and reconciling nature.

When tracing the origin of rap and hip-hop music, one uncovers the art form's original purpose as providing a source of encouragement, enlightenment and, ultimately, action against oppression. One central theme is that of music as a spiritual inspiration. The inspiring spirit was not operating in a vacuum but through instruments, the human voice and body, passionate lyrics and choreography. Through instruments like drums, the divine inspired the heart of the oppressed and transformed the participant into an instrument in and of his/herself, thereby affecting the message of the spirit not only by his/her voice, but also by the person's electrified body. The thrilled and rhythmic movements of the whole body both communicated the mood of the spirit and served as a magnet and medium for the "liberating spirit". Christians may have great difficulty reconciling themselves with such theological explanations, especially when we take into consideration the nature of the Holy Spirit (was the spirit of God as part of the trinity). Personal beliefs aside, it is impossible to deny that an examination of the subject matter would help us in understanding how the Holy Spirit of God communicates to the world through those he has "in-filled" and endowed with his gifts.

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<sup>67</sup> Niggaz Wit Attitudes, "Straight Outta Compton, 1988: Fuck the police," Lyricsdepot.com, <http://www.lyricsdepot.com/n-w-a/fuck-tha-police.html> (accessed March 11, 2012).

<sup>68</sup> Brooks, America's Black Musical Heritage, 42-43.

Observed also is that the music was a tool for liberation. The traditional or primitive Blues served as a medium for the liberating spirit, providing meaning not only to the oppressed but also to the oppressors. As the spirit turned the artist according to the occasion, the artist turned according to the aspects of the music he/she was inspired to emphasize. According to Brooks, Africans interpreted the power of the spirit in music as not about going to heaven or hell; they articulated that it was about healing between individuals and the supernatural forces as well as healing between individuals and whole communities. It is important to emphasize that spiritual possession was deemed impossible without the help of instrumentation or passionate vocal music. In this manner, the spirit alerted the community to impending danger and decried the evils of oppressors through musicians. In addition, through these spiritually endowed artists, the spirit encouraged and reconciled the oppressed.

Spiritual blacks were encouraged by music to endure and persist in fighting for freedom. Again, the spirit's purpose and mission in the artists as interpreted by Africans sound strange to us as Christians; however, the analysis provides a valid theological basis for understanding rap and hip-hop.

The African perception of songs, music and dance provides an effective background for addressing modern-day challenges faced by black youths. The aforementioned artistic mediums were especially important to blacks throughout history (both in Africa and during the Diaspora) because of the great emphasis they placed on oral and visual communication.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, there was centrality of music in fighting the enemy, among other aims (like encouragement, teaching, reconciliation, and

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<sup>69</sup> Isidore Okpewho, *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character; and Continuity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 5-10.

entertainment).<sup>70</sup> As seen in the Brazilian *Capoeira*, “primitive” or traditional music was also used to communicate a message of individual and cultural self-worth among the oppressed. Besides containing specific references to localized oppression, researcher Tricia Rose asserts that rap and hip-hop contain specific references to current oppression.<sup>71</sup>

Rappers providing negative commentary on social and political issues like public education, police brutality, racial profiling, the crisis of the drug culture, the media, and public space have modeled themselves after “primitive” and classic artists. Tupac Shakur’s *My Skin is my Sin* explains his feeling that in American society it is considered a sin to be black; this song and others like it create awareness of social injustice. On the subject of education, a Dead Prez paint a picture of continued black oppression, saying today’s school system has its roots in slavery:

Man that school sh-- is a joke  
The same people who control the school system  
Control the prison system, and the whole social system  
Ever since slavery, know what I am saying?<sup>72</sup>

Other rappers, aware of the need to provide a voice for the neglected inner-city communities, see rap as the language of poetry and journalism. This unique perspective regards rap as “Black American CNN.”<sup>73</sup> Rappers have also kept the Pan-African

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<sup>70</sup> C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 116-117.

<sup>71</sup> Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 123.

<sup>72</sup> Miller and Nowak, 183.

<sup>73</sup> Janette Beckman, *Rap: Portraits and Lyrics of a Generation of Black Rockers* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), xviii.



consciousness and solidarity as we observe from Prez's proclamation: "I'm an African, never an African American/ Blacker than Black, I take it back to the origin."<sup>74</sup>

Rappers also call for global justice, rapping against the extremely repressive and exploitative economic and political systems of the West. Instead of concentrating on their urge for Africa, they emphasize their people's need to get organized and demand justice. Chuck D warns:

The Ku Klux Klan, is on the loose  
Training their kids on machine gun use. ...  
Hot rod policemen  
Killing babies/beating sisters/into miscarriages  
Killing us wherever they want to  
Brothers we better get hip and come off this trip-<sup>75</sup>

On economic circumstances facing blacks, Public Enemy's song *White Heaven/Black Hell* proclaims:

Black Preacher ---- White Jesus  
Black Police ---- White Judge  
Black Business ---- White accountant  
Black Record Company ---- White Distribution  
Black Politician ---- White President<sup>76</sup>

Enemy's *White Heaven/Black Hell* raises rap to the intellectual and philosophical level of thinkers like Frantz Fanon.<sup>77</sup> Fanon, like a rapper, wrote to portray the colonial world cut into two—one white and privileged, the other non-white and deprived.<sup>78</sup> These two distinct worlds are readily apparent in modern America. Perhaps to counteract such

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<sup>74</sup> Dead Prez, *I'm A African, in Let's Get*, CD, written and performed by Dead Prez.

<sup>75</sup> Droppin' science: critical essays on rap music and hip hop culture By William Eric Perkins Temple University Press, PA, published 1996.

<sup>76</sup> Somebody Scream!: "Rap Music's Rise to Prominence in the Aftershock of Black ...By Marcus Reeves," lyricsdepot.com. <http://www.lyricsdepot.com/public-enemy/white-heaven-black-hell.html>

<sup>77</sup> Jennifer Poulos. "Fanon page: Frantz Fanon," english.emory.edu.

<http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Fanon.html> -<http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Fanon.html> (accessed on December 30, 2011).

divisions, rappers urge for black solidarity worldwide as is evident in Dead Prez's rap:

"No, it ain't about where you stay/ It's about the Motherland."<sup>79</sup>

Rappers also denounce media representation of Black people and call attention to the poor public services that state and public officials provide black communities. This unfortunate reality is exposed in Public Enemy's song *911 is a Joke*:

Hit me, going, going, gone  
Now I dialed 911 a long time ago  
Don't you see how late they are reaching—  
They only come and they come when they wanna  
911 is a joke we don't want 'em<sup>80</sup>

All of the previously cited songs share the same purpose as traditional and classic Blues; they highlight the issues affecting their communities hoping to alert and educate society.

### **Rap and Hip-Hop as a Challenge**

While Christianity is centered upon true hope and offers lasting peace, New Age movements and materialism have adulterated hope by offering only short-term peace. The community of Roxbury is currently struggling with this very problem. Modern secular music and culture are based on the power of technology, with materialism artistically camouflaged in postmodern media and technology (e.g., iPods, YouTube, etc.). While artistically thrilling and satisfying, this secular music acts like a spellbinding siren enticing Roxbury Christian youth and young adults away from their faith and devotion to Christ.

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<sup>79</sup> Prez, Dead. *I'm A African*. Track no. 2, written and performed by Dead Prez, "Let's Get Free" CD Epc, 2000.

<sup>80</sup> Don't Rhyme for the Sake of Riddlin': The Authorized Story of Public Enemy By Russell Myrie, <http://www.publicenemy.com/index.php?page=page5&item=3&num=58>

Although the Roxbury community may be described as progressive because of its emphasis on “positive” values such as the “American Dream,” the ends have not justified the means. The American Dream, originally defined as pursuing life goals and climbing the social ladder through the freedom and democracy of America, has become warped and taken on the meaning of amassing material goods. While both definitions are dependent upon individual abilities and work ethic rather than pre-determined class structure, Americans have turned what was originally a vision of opportunity into a dream of motor vehicles, designer goods and high wages.<sup>81</sup>

While it was a dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement, in actuality it has turned out to be a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us have grown weary and mistrustful of it. The dream should be a dream of social order in which each man and each woman should be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.<sup>82</sup>

At the root of many of our modern trends are the corrupt attempts at realizing the American Dream through corporate greed and intelligent marketing. Since the 1980s individual businessmen have been encouraging young artists and musicians to turn what used to be the musical art of liberation into a musical art of materialism and product promotions.

Some might say that the youth and young adults of Roxbury are at a turning point. The influence of the New Age movement of secular rap music and hip-hop culture is magnetizing the youth and young adults away from the Christian influence of gospel music and Christian culture. Is it okay for Roxbury Christian youth and young adults to

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<sup>81</sup> What is the American Dream? Library of Congress August 21, 2008.  
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/index.html> (accessed on December 30, 2011).

<sup>82</sup> What is the American Dream?" Accessed in the Library of Congress August 21, 2008.  
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/index.html> (accessed on December 30, 2011).

choose the way of the New Age movement without Christ? Will there be a future for Roxbury youth and young adults if they choose the New Age movement culture without the guidance and protection of Christ in their life? If it is the Devil's scheme to deprive the Roxbury Christian community of the younger population (who would be the workforce of today and tomorrow), will the community still have a future?

Although it is dangerous to follow the New Age movement without Christ, secular social forces have been working hard to take the eyes of Roxbury's Christian youth and young adults off the true hope in Christ. Most of the youth and young adults are already under the influence of the New Age movement and partake in sex, drugs, violence, and the rejection of the Christian faith. Unfortunately, such degeneration is often associated with the New Age movement of secular rap and hip-hop culture. "New Age movement draws on both Eastern and Western spiritual and metaphysical traditions and then infuses them with influences from self-help and motivational psychology, holistic health, parapsychology, consciousness research and quantum physics."<sup>83</sup> At the same time, there has been a struggle by Christians of various churches to understand the effects of rap and hip-hop in order to successfully address the current problems presented by these music genres. Although the church body may ponder and discuss the challenge, more immediate and effective change can be realized when the church body acts practically and in great wisdom on the issue. It is my conclusion that identifying the negative effects of rap and hip-hop on youth and young adults without coming up with wise and practical ways to downplay the secular influence in the community is a fruitless effort.

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<sup>83</sup> Nevill Drury, *The New Age: Searching for the Spiritual Self* (London, England, UK: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 34.

In the Holy Temple Church, as in most other congregations, when symptoms of secular influence start showing in the life of some youth and young adults, the older Christians are often found complaining, passing judgment, and “settling” (not approaching the problem from its root cause) instead of “solving” (attempting to eliminate the problems right from the root). Like an untreated covered wound, youth decline continues to intensify. Holy Temple Church must learn that just as a covered wound only festers, turning a blind eye to the problems will not help.

The problem can only be resolved once it has been exposed and treated. In most cases, according to my observations, the Holy Temple Church, like some other churches in Roxbury, does not take this critical approach. Problems are addressed superficially, not from the ground up. Symptoms like lack of interest in praise, worship, prayers, Bible study, and church attendance speak volumes. When such symptoms are neither taken seriously nor properly diagnosed, they become cancerous. The lack of action and/or resolution creates a stifling atmosphere, making the church youth and young adults feel as if they are in bondage and they yearn for freer fields in search of freedom and safer grounds.

For instance, the youth are confused by the commands the church gives to not do this or that yet the church does not attempt to learn why they do this or that. In turn, the church fails to understand the behavior and decision-making processes of youths that are key to determining the best practices for retaining youth involvement within the faith community. According to several leaders of the Holy Temple Church, the youth feel insecure, not because of the commands but because the commands do not relate to that for which they long; therefore, confused about what is happening, they lose their

Christian focus and begin to seek freedom and safer grounds outside the church. These new grounds inevitably turn out to be disappointing and, often, dangerous. Dangerous lifestyles choices like drug and alcohol use have already led a good number of Roxbury youth and young adults into a troubled life.

To understand what discontented youth and young adults long for in the church, there is need for further investigation and clarification. Since they come to the church from socially and economically unstable settings, like any troubled person they enter the church expecting some comfort. Their expectation of comfort from the faith community provides an opportunity for words and deeds of counsel that can change their attitudes and behaviors. They also enter expecting some excitement and joy, an opportunity for self-nurturing, as well as a new outlook on and attitude towards life and others.

Although the church is in opposition to secular rap music and hip-hop culture, she can successfully attract youth and young adults back to the Christian faith. Portraying working faith and conveying the Word of God in a stimulating and joyful manner can prove therapeutic in addressing the confusion and distress experienced by the youth of Roxbury. We should not forget that these youth also come to services expecting healing and excitement through entertainment and companionship such that church is thrilling and healing rather than boring. In other words, most of the youth and young adults come to the church in search of what can soothe their soul while, simultaneously, keeping them engaged and present.

Holy Temple Church, like most other churches in the neighborhood, hardly offers youth and young adults an environment with a safe floatation device for waiting out life's many storms. The challenges faced by Roxbury youth and young adults, their loved ones

and their community can prove overwhelming and highly destructive. The secular source of comfort and joy is a farce and lacks the church's potential for support. Unfortunately, the church has been busy building dikes in the form of rules, hoping this will help her youth resist the great and stormy swirling waters within Roxbury's community, family life, and the sweet but deadly venom of the New Age culture and its secular music.

Inexplicably, the conceptual generational difference between the youth and young adults and the congregant members of Holy Temple Church is quantified by sociological experiences. This proves problematic given that the younger community members live in a microcosm built on more socially pervasive issues than their elders. The reality is that the younger generation has endured many a tumultuous experience unique to modern society. One positive approach to dealing with these stressors is to embrace the traditional ideology of rap and hip-hop as a viable intercessor between youth experience and their communion with God.

Since 1947 the Holy Temple Church and its unwavering faith in God has been a source of support for the Roxbury community in overcoming a history of social disenfranchisement, economic repression and educational oppression. However, to help overcome the current challenges faced by Roxbury's youth and young adults, the church must stop investing in the engineering of dikes to safeguard their community and recognize the urgent need for a security stronger than a dike. The church should think of something like an ark, especially since this time the stormy swirling waters of the New Age movement have broken the church walls and the troublesome secular influence is now inside the church. The church youth and young adults will only find security by "floating" on the faith of the church. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the

evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). The things the youth see God doing in and through them make their faith grow. Therefore, there is a need for the church to make frequent inquiries to identify and address the youth and young adult's socio-economic and spiritual problems from the roots up.

In better effort to validate this assertion Chapter Two, which is the review of literature, is the backbone of my research. The literature review will add to the scope of my research question to better understand unchurched Young Adults who embody the rap and hip-hop culture and lifestyle.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

When surveying the landscape of traditional theological principles versus modern theological conceptualization it is imperative to identify the current authority's perception of other theologians regarding the integrations of the new with the old. The theological literary topics explored below illustrate said correlations and can be related to the innumerable ideologies submerged within the culture of urban youth and young adults and rap and hip-hop music. Many of the authors examined the following theological principles: organizational learning comprehension as a viable tool for capacity sustainability, limited dominion of mankind as an unresolved enduring entity dependent upon individual freedom, the power struggle of the Church dwelling in an urban environment versus spiritual authority of God's people, and the biblical trust of God's people who desire to comprehend the urban environment as well as to love the urban community members.

#### The Fifth Discipline

In *The Fifth Discipline*<sup>1</sup>, author Peter M. Senge asserts that learning exemplifies the central nature of humanity by conveying the notion of recreation as applicable to individuals and organizations. Senge's research goes beyond a simple explanation of learning and its key facets by also identifying the need for individuals to acquire and implement an amendable learning approach that will enhance their own ability to

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<sup>1</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York, NY: Currency Double Day Dell Publishing, 1990).

develop. Senge developed a measure of standards categorize the unification to the modern learning individuals are as followed:

**System thinking-** teaches to locate the problem within the organization and then to create a comprehensive, system-wide solution that will fix the problem without destroying the organization. This concept is based in cognitive theory.

**Mental models-**talks about how mental models are very helpful in teaching about the problem. Rap and hip-hop performers utilize their artistic vision as a means to present and explore social issues with their audience.

**Building shared vision-**Rap and hip-hop involve listening and paying attention to sound lyrics, thus encouraging the rappers to engage in a shared vision of the problem and solution.

**Team learning-**Rap and hip-hop involve team learning because many rappers perform together in freestyle, which mean they must practice thing together.

The theories of Senge's writings necessitate neutrality in surveying the totality of his work from a conceptual and contextual point of view. Senge's work comes from a place of practitioner leader. The scope of his work centers on how intercession is a pivotal indicator changing depth of learning of organizations.

## **The Hip-hop Generation**

*The Hip-hop Generation*<sup>2</sup> is an anthropological examination of the power of hip-hop culture. The book focuses on how the birth of the hip-hop demographic was born out of frustration and lack of community civic engagement. Kitwana lays a theoretical foundation for the evolution of hip-hop to Gangster Rap to pervasive coveting of materialistic idolatry and misogyny of the female sex.

What began as a tool to criticize and bring awareness to community social issues within the urban Black community evolved into a dangerous personification of gangster life as emblematic for thugs. As a result, hip-hop culture, environment and social norms became a badge of honor for youths and young adults to voice their own dismal situation.

## **Christ and Culture**

In the book *Christ and Culture*<sup>3</sup> Richard Niebuhr claims that it is profitable to accept the relativity not only of historical objects but, more importantly, of the historical subject, the observer and the interpreter. The interaction of the Church and the world has a historical relativism, which needs to be understood from the light of theological and Theo-centric relativism. Niebuhr writes with the aim of providing an understanding from this light.

Richard Niebuhr sees mankind as limited intellectually and emotionally right from the beginning, or Creation. He holds that, because of its limitations, mankind's relative history and development has been under the governance of the absolute God. He

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<sup>2</sup> Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).

bases his argument on God's words to Israel through the prophet Isaiah (Isa10: 1), to Christians at Corinth through Paul (1Cor 12:1), and to the modern Church through St. Augustine (*City of God*). Niebuhr clearly and incisively begins his book by discussing the general, long-term dilemma faced by Christianity and civilization and then proceeds to discuss Christ against culture, Christ of culture and Christ above culture. In like manner, he develops his argument into another interesting discussion about a paradox in Christ and culture, namely Christ as the transformer of culture.

In his "concluding unscientific postscript" Niebuhr describes the answers Christians have given thus far (Barth, Brunner, and Tillich) to the enduring problem of Christianity and civilization as inconclusive. He further asserts that neither extension nor refinement of study could bring about the conclusive result that would enable people to claim a Christian answer. According to Niebuhr, resolutions and decisions made in an attempt to reconcile Christianity and civilization are relative and related to the fragmentary and frail measure of Christian faith. The reconciliation of Christianity and civilization is like having an answer reconciling God and Lucifer. Since New Testament is Old Testament revealed and Old Testament is New Testament concealed, the problem of Christianity and civilization is as old as the problem of the fall; the spirit of self-importance and self-gratification is a seed which originally manifested itself in the first woman after she yielded to the deception of the serpent who, due to pride and self-gratification, fell from the divine court of *Elohim Sabaoth* the Supreme Being. This is the beginning of civilization, which, through Adam, has continued from the very first generation of humans and into the present.

Besides protection, providence, and companionship, He devised a plan that would return the deceived human being to Him. Niebuhr presents an idea of *Christ as the transformer of culture*. God seeks to bring mankind back into the social culture before the fall. This culture structure is the way of life based on total dependence on God (which is in contrast to the way of life based on the Serpent's deception). The idea of transformation is as old as the fall. After the fall, God devised His plan to man back into relationship with Him. Putting enmity between Christ and the Serpent is part of the plan that He devises immediately after the fall. The 'beginning' and the 'end' look at the resurrected Christ. The fact that Christ is the center of time means that Christ is the fulfillment and the culmination of God's plan to mankind back into his plan of life.

The Church has his presence, power and authority to **transform** mankind in Roxbury from the culture of the Serpent to the culture of God. At HTC the transformation of His presence challenges young and mature congregants alike. The Holy Spirit is both a guide and powerful conduit of change. By relying on him faithfully he will challenge me and use me to challenge others toward transformation.

Niebuhr talks of *dependence freedom*. He states that even though we are free, we are not free as a result of our free will choice. Our being is God's making. Indeed, **faith**, a concept that is central in Niebuhr's idea of dependence freedom, is a prime reality in ministry. Nevertheless, through faith in God people have God's power to stir the spirit toward transformation, which brings forth the things all hope for. Christ and Culture contributed to my research in that it was able to provide integrity to how these two issues are interrelated and that they can act on their own. However, in this case they function better together, rather than apart.

## **City of God and City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church**

*City of God, City of Satan*<sup>4</sup> can and will serve as a bountiful reference work for current and future urban ministry. Among the blatantly unanswered questions of the 1990s were those demanding explanations of the following:

- Why are cities the battlegrounds of hostile principalities and powers?
- What is the mission of the Church in the city?
- How can the Church be supported in accomplishing that mission?

Robert Linthicum has produced a comprehensive collection of writings on the subject of urban biblical theology. He portrays the city as both a dwelling place of God and his people and as a center for Satan and his gofers. He develops from the scriptures a systematic, internally consistent theology of the city that is sociologically sound and provides a biblical explanation for the nature, extent and structures of Bible's power. Furthermore, he presents a biblical exposition of the purpose and mission of the church in the city.

Linthicum's work is divided into three parts that cover, in detail, the city as the battleground, the Church as God's urban advance and spiritual disciplines as the power for ministry. He concludes by quoting Paul's words to the Ephesians (Eph 6:10-13) He sees unlimited power emanating from the scripture, a power given to Christians to sustain their calling in the city. Christians are challenged to take God's calling as being faithful to oneself, to fellow workers in the calling, to the Church's mission to the city, and thus, to God. He motivates Christians from the light of faith

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<sup>4</sup> Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991).

to ‘keep on keeping on’—something which challenges Christians to keep their faith in God alive by acting their faith.

One of Linthicum’s ideas is that of the battle between YHWH (King David’s God) and Shalem (the local god of pre-Israelite Canaan), which has been manifesting in cities since the time of Abraham. In support of Linthicum, Eden can be seen as the city of ‘*Ishi* (first man or Adam) and ‘*Ishisha* (first woman or ‘Awa/Eve).

Furthermore one can view the city as one of two witnesses experienced— an epoch before the fall (a city of no battle) and an epoch after the fall (the beginning of battles in the city). This clears up any misunderstanding that may arise through the attempt to understand Linthicum’s view of two battling forces in the cities (battlefields). He clarifies that there are not two equal forces (as in Zoroastrianism) in his theory of battling urban forces. God is viewed as the one who causes to be what he is caused to be. Lucifer is not an independent force; he emanates from an intentional plan of God. Since God had a purpose in creating Lucifer, the focus of this section of the research will be on Linthicum’s concept of what is the purpose, not the cause.

One can look to **transformation** so as to understand God’s purpose. Why does God cause evil in cities? Although Linthicum talks of the battle between God and Satan in cities, the party, which feels pain and suffering, is God’s creation, not Himself or Satan. Why does God allow for the suffering of his creation as a result of his encounter with Lucifer? It is observable that people, animals, and plants suffer in rural life as a result of evil works, which emanate from the city life. Once the evil penetrates into the rural, it grows into untold magnitude only to swallow all of life. Today HIV/Aids (which began in cities) has swept millions and millions of poor

people in rural areas of underdeveloped countries, yet it started from the life of people in the mega cities.

Worship is another important topic of focus in Linthicum's book. The purpose of God's (transformation) is reconciliation through true worship. Transformation is a spiritual process, which decodes into physical for the sake of spiritual. It is when evil attitudes melt into godly attitudes. This process requires worship and intercessory prayer, preaching, bible study, and teaching. Since change of attitude affects personality, more practical things like empowerment and promotion of the right attitude would help one respond appropriately while ministering in the city.

In other words, transformation is the key concept in urban ministry. Unless there is need by God in those who pray for the city, in those who preach, in those who teach, and in those who help, they do in vain. Unless there is God's need in those of the city who worship God to spare the city, those who worship, worship in vain. Seeking, listening, and obeying the will of God is the key; for it is He who fights the battle against Lucifer. As Truth and Spirit, we have to follow him as he wrestles with the youth and young adults of Roxbury and HTC.

Part of this battle stems from imbalance between the environment and the indoctrinate faith. There is a miscommunication of intentions and purpose that culminates in discord between the two. Desire, heart, love of God's people and the precipitation of God's peace are inexplicably the keys to the success of any urban ministry, especially that of HTC.



## **To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City**

Gornik wrote this book *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City*<sup>5</sup> focusing on the inner city, as a form of biblical faith for people who, not only have a desire to understand the urban city, but who also have a compassionate heart that is pierced by God. Gornik traces the evolution of New Song Community Church and the community where it resides, called “Sandtown.” Like many urban communities, “Sandtown” represents the “other Baltimore,” the “second city” that has not benefited from urban redevelopment or gentrification. Gornik traces the evolution of Sandtown as a prototype for forgotten inner cities — from segregation, to post-industrialization, to the global inner city. The global inner city is the city excluded from the new global economy because of issues like the digital divide. The new forces of tourism or jobs in the information or service economy have not touched Sandtown. For Gornik, the only aspect of the new global economy that seems to have affected Sandtown (as in many other low-income African-American urban communities) has been the growth of the penal system.

Community development is not “the renewal of place apart from people, but [is] the celebration of their gifts and callings in the context of the social and material world.”<sup>6</sup> Gornik shows through New Song how to begin the task of “restoring the breach and repairing the streets to dwell in”. Gornik lays out a sophisticated prescription for change. In the process he does not advocate for mercy ministry that humiliates its recipients. Instead he calls for simply connecting faith with life. This unfolds into a vision for restoring the *Shalom* of God's new creation through thousands of little things done right over a period of many years. He addresses both individuals and structures in the process.

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<sup>5</sup> Mark R. Gornik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Gornik, *To Live in Peace*, 129.

The first chapter of Gornik's text looks at the composition of a neighborhood, and the second chapter, "The Church of the Streets", reviews a church without walls. The third chapter gives a profound explanation of "shalom". The three remaining chapters are titled "Out of Ruins "Sing a New Song" and "The Future of the Inner City."

The author's primary point of focus is injustice. He ties his definition of injustice to "structured sin and the powers that be."<sup>7</sup> He also reports that a source of collective inner city struggle is "*a lifestyle of sin or any deficiencies of moral behavior.*" The author also points out in this subsection a quote by Nicholas Woltersdorff that gives shape to God's justice: "God's love for justice is grounded in his love for the victims of injustice. And his love for the victims of injustice belongs to his love for the little ones of the world: for the weak, defenseless ones, the outsiders."<sup>8</sup>

The author also highlights the way Christians care for one another as an example of how the beloved community is called to serve and love one another.<sup>9</sup> The author also explains that, through a spirit of love and peace, the church community is a community that is welcoming (1Pet 4:9). The author goes on to teach that *shalom* is "always" God's work and a summons to discipleship. He quotes "peace be with you" (John 20:26) to show that when Thomas saw Jesus' wounds he was "drawn into [Christ's] healing."<sup>10</sup>

He also teaches that transformation begins with the populace, their struggles and grief. He ties this thought together with the book of Lamentations to teach God's order

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<sup>7</sup> Gornik, *To Live in Peace*, 50.

<sup>8</sup> Gornik, 51 [which is a footnote of Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 1990, p. 64]

<sup>9</sup> Gornik, *To Live in Peace*, 71.

<sup>10</sup> Gornik, *To Live in Peace*, 109.

of rebuilding by reporting that Lamentations preceded the rebuilding of Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup>

Ergo, a loving father who restores through his peace hears the cries of the people.

The final teaching tool from Gornik's book implemented within the context of this project highlights his three R's: Relocation, Reconciliation and Redistribution.

These have to do with God's love. Relocation focuses on the incarnate love of Christ.

Christ chose to step out of heaven, to move into a marginalized neighborhood on earth, to join in fellowship and dwell with sinful human beings. Reconciliation points to the cross, and redistribution is one way the faithful may initiate God's justice.

By re-creating, community it established the compartmentalization component of our shared creational identity. The researcher administered the key biblical strategy found in the research process developed from Jeremiah through ownership and development of the external factors, such as the environment (Jer. 32:37-41). There, as a sign of hope for the future of the city, Jeremiah purchased vacant land in the heart of an abandoned city. In this respect, peace is not an abstract biblical concept. It means to "pitch your tent" and settle down in the city; it means to relocate there with your heart and also with your talents and economic resources. Although sustainability is vital to any ministry, nothing can be paramount to the comprehension of the history and cultural ideology of the urban ministry.

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<sup>11</sup> Gornik, To Live in Peace, 109.

## Urban Ministry

Much of *Urban Ministry*<sup>12</sup> book is an authoritative historical presentation of facts through the categorization of three leadership typologies. There is a definite need for a distinct leadership typology in urban ministry, but with each type comes the need to adapt appropriately to the specified environment. In urban communities that have experienced a history of injustice, oppression and inequity, the totality of their experiences cannot compare to their ability to rebound from their given circumstances. This is evident through HTC's desire, not to focus on the particular circumstances of their environment, but to envision where God will transport them and their ministry.

Embracing their given circumstances enhanced HTC's ability to reside in peace, rather than dwell on the negative. Peace for Roxbury and HTC comes from the reassurance they have of the power, authority and autonomy God has provided his people and church as having final dominion.

## Seek the Peace of the City

Eldin Villafañe lays out the vision of a church in *Seek the Peace of the City*<sup>13</sup> that does not retreat from the city but, like the prophet Jeremiah, chooses to serve the urban community in the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His book issues a call to all Christians to *Seek the Peace of the City* instead of cautiously fleeing to the familiar. Villafañe demonstrates in his book a lively style of social spirituality that does not require retreating to a cave or withdrawing to the green lawns of suburbia. Conscious of the

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<sup>12</sup>Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City & the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1995).

challenges being faced by particular and various ethnic and linguistic minorities (and that the power of the Holy Spirit of God is at work in unexpected places everyday) he creatively writes with a culturally diverse urban theological education experience, encouraging Christians (especially the Pentecostal movements) not to forget their urban origins and new urban frontiers. He also encourages them not to relent for what appear to be safer, cleaner, more homogeneous, and less threatening aspects in their call to urban evangelism.

Various chapters of Villafaña's book cover in detail his briefly underlined views of urban socio-theology, urban ministry and urban theological education. On urban socio-theology, he challenges not only the Hispanic Church, but also all Christians, to express true partnership with the poor. He also reminds Christians of the price to be paid for true partnership, a price that makes true discipleship costly. On urban ministry, he identifies cultural/social reality, communication/language, and the church as the fundamental elements of the matrix of intergenerational dynamics, which define the context that forms and informs intergenerational reality in America (especially among Latinos). He challenges Christians to consider coming to grips with these elements by understanding the significant role they play in the lives of Christians, an understanding which makes Christians' responses relevant and substantial. He calls Christians to envision a program that combines ministry practice with theological reflection. Whether structured or informal, the vision is for a program with a sense of hope that knows the past and its impact on the present through affirmation, research and planning that looks towards the future. According to Villafaña, it is essential for such a program to empower the existing leadership whilst training newer leadership.

A Christian ministry with well-rounded education (holistically informing education) not only addresses issues theologically, but also socio-culturally and communicably. However, amongst Villafañe's views, partnership with the poor is a primary idea without which it would be difficult to respond relevantly and substantially to urban intergenerational reality and theological education. Most of the immigrants come from poor generations who migrate from their countries in search of greener pastures. Since they are in poor status, circumstances in the mega cities only allow them to find space amongst the poor natives of the new country. The poor immigrants mix with the poor natives and form a unique, multicultural intergenerational reality in the city.

Since those who create solutions for the problem of the poor are either the rich or are influenced by the rich, most of the social programs and projects become a rich man/woman's strategy to control and confine the poor in the vicious cycle of poverty. Addressing poverty from the root cause will help address other problems related to poverty. Fear is a common denominator and, consequently, the most basic problem whose solution may help in addressing challenging socio-cultural and theological situations.

The problem of fear is spiritual as well as psychological. Since attitude depends on knowledge and understanding, HTC needs to focus on spiritual and psychological knowledge and understanding. This will displace the urban youth and young adult's ignorance or ungodly indoctrination. The urban youth and young adults' new self-perception would foster an irresistible urge to break the walls of vicious wealth with the aim of allowing the poor to share fairly in the national or global "cake." In addition,

HTC members should encourage the church towards initiatives that would foster a new attitude as part of the rich man/woman's lifestyle (*cruciform life*).

The urban, like the metropolitan, have spiritual and psychological problems that need the same approach of changing attitude through well-rounded education, right information, and encouragement for the genuine initiative of programs and projects. These projects would contain the new self for a cruciform life. Empowerment and advocacy for the new identity will go hand in hand with change of attitude as one of the ways of containing the new identity of both the poor and the rich for the cruciform life.

### **Transforming the City**

The problem of city-dwellers who are poor, homeless, drug dealers, criminals, prostitutes, and murderers in them or in the relationship between them and what makes them what they are? If we say the problem is in the relationship, how then can we relate our Christian faith in relationships? How can the "sacred" society relate its 'sacredness' to the "secular" society, which is being transformed by modern civilization into cities and mega cities, yet for some reason the cities keep attracting the poor and insecure?

In *Transforming the City*<sup>14</sup> authors Eldin Villafañe, Bruce Jackson, Robert A. Evans, and Alice Frazer Evans share views which shows our ever-changing life and how we can be transformed especially in the cities. They see a network of a dynamic, complex nature of life not only between cities and rural areas, but also within the cities themselves. According to Villafañe and his co-authors, this dynamic and complex life in cities demands a different way of thinking about Christian outreach and how Christians

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<sup>14</sup> Eldin Villafañe, Bruce Jackson, Robert A. Evans, and Alice Frazer Evans. *Transforming the City: Reframing Education for Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002).

develop leaders. While there exists the need to recast the problem of Christians' current thinking and actions in education for urban ministry (so that it is more open to mutual, beneficial resolutions), Villafañe sees contextualization, constituency, community, curriculum, collaboration, and confession as essential elements crucial for the reframing of theological education.

The primary concern when conducting the HTC project was in the way the participants related the realities of life with faith. To deal with correlating problems in Roxbury, HTC has to be careful to ensure that the plans and approaches they offer correlate in a way that shakes off the boundaries of *Transforming the City* is not only a God- invoking thought- provoking phenomenon, but also a revelation to the core of Christ's ministry.

### **A Prayer for the City**

Eldin Villafane examines the effect of rural life in 21<sup>st</sup> century cities. According to Villafane's cognition of the challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he perceives urban reality with its problems and promises as presenting a singular challenge to the life and mission of the Church. In Villafane's *A Prayer of the City*<sup>15</sup>, he claims "For only through the mercy and grace of God, by means of a faithful church, will the human city experience what should be the purpose of the cities."<sup>16</sup>

The assertion is that the mission of the city is to establish order and conditions of quality of life among its great human diversity and density. The two main parts of the book trace the plans of the 'political Spirit' from the time of St. Paul right up through the

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<sup>15</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *A Prayer for the City: Further Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Austin, TX: Libros AETH, 2001:45-50).

<sup>16</sup> Villafañe, *A Prayer for the City*, 45-50.



21<sup>st</sup> Century. After the author's theological reflection on the politics of the political Spirit (Christ and his Church) he reflects on the Spirit of the Latino and African-American promise.

The real implication, which unfolds, is the thought that education will change the attitude of people while changed attitudes will lead to changed behavior and therefore restructure peace in cities. However, it is difficult to comprehend the 'faithful Church'. The problem is not how to educate; rather who will educate whom and what will they teach them? Which is this faithful Church, which is free from the self-centered doctrines of the Christian traditionalists, egalitarians, and pluralists? Does the city need self-centered strategy for shalom, or does it need strategies based on the centering self of the 'Spirit'? Who should we list for our prayers as the educator under the instructions of the Spirit, and whom should we list for the education by the educator under the instructions of the Spirit? It is ironic that secular forces have a greater representation of traditional, egalitarian, and pluralistic Christians from our Churches.

If the goal is the peace of the city, we should think about what happens when a population of rural dwellers becomes urban, (which is becoming prevalent in cities), goes without food, shelter, and medical care. Is it insecurity or security, which ensues? We should think about what would happen if the poor drifting into cities stopped migrating because employment, education, medical attention, and other things, which they seek in urban towns, are affordably available in the rural life. Supposing immigration declines because of emigration of people from cities to rural areas would there be a sense of security or it would be a sense of insecurity for city dwellers or the immigrant?

By offering prayerful and pedagogic concern of HTC in response to the challenge of the urban city, there is still a question of who is it that the Spirit is using as the Church for the peace of the Roxbury. There is also a question of what is the primary problem to focus on in the HTC's response to urban city challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Is the problem the poor who are populating cities for survival (and ending up as "criminals" due to lack of opportunities to survive and discrimination), or it is the rich who use the poor as underpaid workers (restricting their wealth and security to expand their 'business')? If we say it is both then the pedagogic approach would need a further check for some depth. Otherwise, the justice of displacement assumes all traditionalism, egalitarianism, and pluralism prayerful would be nothing but the presence and rule of God himself in the cities. There would be no hunger in the urban cities, no homeless, and no sick people without medical care. This 'peace' would by itself confront and dismantle the claims of the "dominion of death."

Now that I have examined the foundational principles of my research topic, the research scope will become more focused on the theological objective of how a didactic tool such as rap and hip-hop can transform a generations mindset for the empower of them and their community.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

This section surveys Biblically based philosophical and theological arguments that affirm God's influential presence behind the mysterious rhythm and spontaneous harmony of rap and hip-hop. It also explains the conceptual bases of the biblically based arguments that claim the artists, instruments and audience members to serve as a medium of the inspiring Spirit (whose purpose of inspiration is to move man/woman towards fear of and commitment to God). In the manner, the section exposes how rap originated as an orchestration of Divine power and how God is the perfect and excellent rapper. The objective is to understand how rap and hip-hop can be used as a viable didactic tool to teach the word of God through evangelism.

Most of the characters that are mentioned in the Bible are "rappers" and their ministry is that of "rapping." It is my belief that the characters in the bible are using the form of talk speech to speak about the current situation in their communities as a way of life. There is life and death in the power of the tongue. A conceptual analysis of the Bible reveals that the art of rapping was initially used to encourage and educate the troubled and warn the oppressors.

In *Rap Therapy*, Christian author Don Elligan argues that there is no negative to educating through words as it can lead to spiritual self-discovery and development. He intimates that there is nothing wrong with excitement and joy that seeks to nurture the development of this personal spiritual discovery as it expresses spirituality to others.<sup>1</sup> Like Elligan, William Romanowski explains in *Eyes Wide Open* that it is difficult for

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<sup>1</sup> Don Elligan, *Rap Therapy* (New York, NY: Kensington Publishing Corp, 2004), 29-39.

individuals to seek their personal spiritual discovery unless they are motivated. He explains that personal spiritual discovery emanates out from one who has already discovered his/her spirituality (and is maturing in his/her spiritual development) and influences those seeking to do the same.<sup>2</sup> According to Romanowski, to be God's image bearer is to be human, and to be human is to be a cultural agent. Unfortunately, some modern churches remain unconvinced of rap and hip-hop's biblical (and, therefore, theological) roots.

The goal of this chapter is to develop a workable theology of place, peace, and prayer<sup>3</sup> from the perspective of evangelical development within the city of Roxbury. Evangelical development will be viewed through the lens of rap and hip-hop. For example, in 1 Samuel 16:14-23, Saul requests that young David play for him in order to relieve him of the evil spirit that has come upon him. Simply put, David's performance is musical therapy for Saul.

Throughout the course of this project, the conceptual methodology behind the research was both inspired and challenged by several Old Testament writers. The biblical voices of Amos and Ezekiel, as well as the Psalms of David, remind the people of Israel that to remain blessed they must practice social justice in their own relationships. For the people of Israel the prophetic word of Ezekiel has been particularly encouraging. His vision in chapter 37 has shown them a model for the ministry of transformation. Ezekiel's model also stems from a theology of place (identification), a theology of peace (evangelism/engagement), and a theology of prayer (reality check).

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<sup>2</sup> William D. Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001), 43.

<sup>3</sup> This is from the second DMin residency in which Dr. Eldin Villafañe presented an outline of working through a theology of urban ministry.

## **Place- A Theology of Place**

Ezekiel 37:1 depicts a valley of bones. The ministry of HTC with urban youth and young adults in Roxbury is a valley ministry. Ezekiel's valley is filled with dry skeletal remains. The city of Roxbury is filled with the remnants of those who have been rejected and dried-up. The multitude of dry bones in Ezekiel's vision was Israel in exile – trampled and shattered. Similarly, the people in Roxbury, especially the youth and young adults, are exiled from their communities. The city is a dead city filled with desperate residents who lack the knowledge and resources to revive their community.

### **The City as a Context for the Development of Urban Evangelism**

To successfully evangelize and reach out to the community, urban ministry must be relational. HTC will implement urban Christian rap music ministry, taking a holistic approach to reaching out to youth and young adults and bringing them back into the church. Many of us do not usually see ourselves reaching out and ministering in the dead valley full of dry bones. But Ezekiel reminds us that God frequently challenges His people by leading them out into the middle of a valley populated by the dead and unwanted. This leaves us asking, *“Can these bones live?”*

Ezekiel's mission was to develop a relationship with the bones through prophecy, to inspire and strengthen the Israelites that were taken captive by the Babylonians and remind them that God was still on their side. The individuals ministered to by Ezekiel were rebellious, disrespectful, violent and fearful. As a researcher, God has led me to a similarly barren valley with a message of transformation for a generation neglected by the church.

Transformation is a central theme of the research project at HTC. According to Linthicum, God initiates transformation. Transformation is a spiritual process, which explains the physical for the sake of the spiritual – it is when evil attitudes melt into godly attitudes. This process requires worship, intercession, preaching, bible study and teaching. Since a change of attitude impacts personality, more practical things like empowerment and the promotion of the right attitude help one respond appropriately while ministering in the urban community. The purpose of God’s initiating transformation is reconciliation through true worship.

God did not send the researcher into the community empty-handed; He provided tools in the form of Christian rap and hip-hop culture to evangelize and transform the dead valley of bones in Roxbury. The HTC project uses this genre of music to reach out to the urban youth and young adults to help them find God in a place long dissociated from Him. The music and culture of Christian rap and hip-hop are empowering the youth and young adults to engage in a relationship with God through a form of worship that will revive their spirit.

Once the dry and thirsty community members are transformed and turn to God, God will use them to restore his order in city institutions and systems. Ideally, all individuals will recognize that Christ reconciles all things to himself as a result of his bloodshed on the cross (Col 1:20), affirming those who worship the Father in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23) while identifying with rap music as a component of “all things” for which Christ died. Understanding also that rap music has its own language (the language of struggle); we identify rap music as one of the many languages that encompass the throne to sing, and praises to the Lamb that was slain (Rev 5:9).

The spirits of many of Roxbury and HTC's youths and young adults are thirsty, looking to be quenched by something that resonates with them. God is using Christian rap and hip-hop culture to connect with the urban youth and young adults and, thereby, bring peace (the Shalom of God) to His city. Christian music comes in all genres: Country, Rap, R&B, Blues, Jazz, even Gaelic. In each of these musical genres, the Word of God is the same; however, the style or form in which the message is conveyed varies from one genre to another.<sup>4</sup> Christian rap, while unique in its approach, uses the same methodology as any other musical genre that expresses a Christian message.

The ever-present and liberating Spirit of God has held an important place in the lives of black Americans since the times of slavery.<sup>5</sup> White masters strictly forbade slave gatherings, but the threat of severe punishment did little to prevent secretive religious meetings. During these meetings (known as "bush meetings"), worshippers were free to engage in African religious worship where they encountered experiences such as spiritual possession, speaking in tongues, dancing and chanting.<sup>6</sup> In such gatherings, the liberating Spirit of God inspired Negroes to rap against slavery and the abuses of the slave master. These Negroes used Negro spirituals in communicating their inspirations. Negro spirituals are religious songs, which were created by enslaved African people in America.

The Spirit must be present in an urban community like Roxbury, MA. Put succinctly, the Spirit has a mission of liberation. He must instill a sense of conviction in men and women and inspire them to take action and rap against oppressive cultures, ideas and structures. Since the mission of the Spirit is that of liberation, the Spirit must be

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<sup>4</sup> James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 174.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Negro Spirituals," *The Atlantic* (June 1867), 40.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Palmer, *Deep Blues* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1981), 38.

concerned with the suffering of all people, regardless of their personal religious beliefs, or lack thereof.

While not all of Roxbury's secular rap and hip-hop artists battling racism and poverty through music are directly influenced by the Spirit, the principles of faith would intimate that they have been inspired in more subtle ways. To believe is to recognize the Spirit as active even when other community members may be blind to His presence. He is not only with preachers in the pulpit, but also with secular rappers in public arenas rapping about issues relevant to Roxbury's people.

When men and women touched by the Spirit of God embrace the Spirit's rhythm and harmony, edifying artists (like musicians) start emerging in the Church. Without this active presence of the Spirit, the Church would hardly make difference in people's lives. As in Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, the Spirit, through the Church and the words of rappers, would dwell amongst the young adults and give new life to those who feel helpless. Rappers under the influence of the Spirit would, through the Spirit's rhythm, rap to the youth and young adults in a way which would mend their broken hearts with divine music that is both comforting and inspiring.

Restoring humankind to God is the Spirit's ministry, for "unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Ps 127:1). Many of those who live around churches in a place like Roxbury are helpless and hopeless people, especially the young adults. Churches in the community claim to be guided by the all-loving Spirit of God who is merciful and gracious. If the Church yields to the expectations of the Spirit, the



Spirit in His mystery and rhythm would, through the church program, provide an explanation for the suffering, thereby enlightening and empowering the helpless.<sup>7</sup>

The youth and young adults of Roxbury are faced with overwhelming chaos, confusion and injustice on a daily basis. Salvation is the concern of the liberating Spirit in the community. The Spirit's mystery and rhythm encourages (*Evangelia*) and teaches (*Diakonia*) through the Church; therefore, faithful churchgoers come to know the truth of the Spirit, and are set free thanks to their trust in God.

By relying on the power of the Spirit, the people can establish a community of hope.<sup>8</sup> Those who identify the Spirit as their master must learn the language of the Spirit in order to effectively communicate with Him. Prayerful communication, in turn, fosters spirituality within the community. Prayer and spirituality are the internal workings of the liberating Spirit of God and revive human beings on both the personal and communal level.

Eldin Villafañe attributes his vision of liberating the Spirit of God through *agape* (grace) and fellowship, which can be expressed in any setting (even urban Roxbury) through a constituency and curriculum focused on theological education.<sup>9</sup> However, unless the church embraces the rhythm and harmony of the Spirit, the curriculum and its supporters have little hope of creating change. Realizing the centrality of the Spirit's rhythm, Villafañe sees Salsa (a unique blend of Latino rhythms) emerging as the metaphor "par excellence" for Latino reality and Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy Keller, *Ministry of Mercy* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1989), 45.

<sup>8</sup> Linthicum, Robert. *City of God City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 86.

<sup>9</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *A Prayer for the City: Further Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Austin, TX: Libros AETH, 2001), 6.

<sup>10</sup> Villafane, *A Prayer for the City*, 36.

## **Peace- A Theology of Peace**

Ezekiel 37:4-7 speaks about evangelism. Ezekiel is told to prophesy to the bones. We are reminded of our call to dedicate ourselves to divine work, watering the dry bones and, thereby, breathing life back into them. These disintegrating bones are ubiquitous and symbolize the chaos, confusion and injustice faced daily by many youths and young adults. The HTC's mission is to evangelize through seeking peace by praying and engaging the thirsty and dry bones that are Roxbury's neglected community members.

## **The Ministry of Urban Evangelism**

The youth and young adults are the strength within the church. Weak attempts at ministering to them only cause them to sneer at the faith community. In their everyday lives they are bombarded with messages that promote an existence devoid of morals. In order to reach them, we need to be bolder, more radical, more loving and mightier in sharing the Spirit and His message. Several steps are required to achieve this end. First, we should teach our churches to be aware of how easy it is to weaken the meaning of the Gospel because of fear of the unknown: *"My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6)*. Second, we need to educate our churches regarding the suggestive media plaguing our youths until they truly understand the pain and hurt experienced by the younger generations. Once the two are taken into consideration, we can encourage our churches to empower our youths to create. If you tell the youth, "no", without any alternatives, where does that leave them? Third, we must warn our churches to stop trying to breed "church folk" out of our youths and, instead, encourage them to develop a new, generational appropriate relationship with the Church. We need to

TEACH our youths about their value in Christ, and that they are vital in declaring this value in this generation.

Christian rap music can make the Bible become more accessible to youths and young adults. The traditional Christian worship service can easily embrace any type of music, including Christian rap. In fact, Christian rap could become an invaluable tool within today's faith community as it resonates profoundly with the biblically illiterate and un-churched youths from other cultures.<sup>11</sup> James White (referencing Martin Luther) notes that, "music was one means by which all could exercise their priestly ministry."<sup>12</sup> When older members of our congregation take up the songs of Christian rap, this lets the youth and young adults know that they are God's people too. According to Mark Gornik, "When people know they are deeply loved, cared for, accepted and wanted by a community, they are transformed by the experience. Preaching that flows out of community life and serves its formation, rather than being the artificial focus of the church is similarly transformational."<sup>13</sup> This helps to honor and support the integrity of the music they use for praising God. This also helps the youths and young adults connect their faith with the world around them. In other words, music is a way to mend broken hearts and incorporate the hope and peace that comes with faith into one's everyday life.

Many Christian rap songs are almost impossible to listen to without adding movement like swaying, tapping feet and clapping hands.<sup>14</sup> This is how the younger generation can engage their head, heart, body and spirit in a worship service. Christian

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<sup>11</sup> Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, *Nurturing Faith & Hope: Black Worship as a Model for Christian Education* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 145-147.

<sup>12</sup> James F. White, *Protestant Worship Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 41.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Gronik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing House, 2002), 74.

<sup>14</sup> Wimberly, *Nurturing Faith & Hope*, 149-152.

rap music is not “dumbing down” a service; rather, it welcomes a broader spectrum of participants into the Church.<sup>15</sup> The experience can be compared to that of communion. When we take communion every first Sunday of the month, we bring together our abilities to taste, touch, smell, hear and speak.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, incorporating Christian rap music into the Church will broaden the congregation’s worship experience, activating the senses, uncovering new emotions, and forging new relationships between young and old. If older church members refuse to embrace the Christian rap music of youths, they can never truly comprehend the struggles and accomplishments of our youths.

Using biblical examples as a backdrop, Linthicum looks at oppression, peace and poverty to explore a theologically sound definition of social justice. He uses Exodus to explain the suffering caused by oppression and the importance of building a new way of worship life once liberation is achieved. He discusses *shalom* and how to distinguish between individual peace and a community-wide peace, as well as the relationship of that peace to God. *Shalom* is a Hebrew word that means peace is not without conflict. Dr. Villafane elaborates upon this definition, explaining that shalom is not just the absence of tension, but also the presence of justice.

Ralph Watkins notes in *The Gospel Remix*, “We welcome hip-hop into the church and like we ought to with any prophetic voice, we ‘test everything; hold fast to what is good’ (1Thess 5:21).” And, just like the Church needs consistent reminders of its identity

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<sup>15</sup> James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 71.

<sup>16</sup> Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 14.

and its past, the community must be reminded that hip-hop is rooted in a tradition of unity, communal support and the celebration of African Diasporic culture.”<sup>17</sup>

Urban church leaders need to teach youths and young adults how to create a holy culture. The Spirit of God ministers *within cultures* to draw out hearts and establish new life. For example, you have youth faced with the challenge of dressing in all sorts of contemporary fashions, most of which compromise their integrity (e.g. Apple Bottom jeans, low risers, bulletproof vests, etc). Our approach should not be to tell them to go and put on a long dress and a turtleneck in the summer so that they can look holy. Rather we need to teach them that the way of holiness is embracing the fact that the Great One resides in them. He wants them to live in such a way that they can relate to their peers without compromising themselves. We need to show them how to look “hot” without looking indecent. The same concept can be applied to music. We need to encourage them to create beats, jump around, spit rhymes, whatever it is they want to do, but do it while declaring that God has set them free from the sin that the hip-hop culture is trying to promote. This gives them a chance to develop their lives as being in the world, but not of it. We must trust them to pursue a stronger life in God.<sup>18</sup> The Church has God’s presence, power and authority to *transform* humankind from a city embracing the culture of the Serpent to a city embracing the culture of God.

In order to evangelize and reach out to our urban youths and young adults in the community, we must work with the common bonds of our realities and relationships. We must truly get to know and understand the people to whom we try to minister.

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<sup>17</sup> Ralph C. Watkins, *The Gospel Remix: Reaching the Hip Hop Generation* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Dean, Kenda C., and Ron Foster. *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998), 174.

## **The Biblical and Theological Perspective**

Those who have experienced rap and hip-hop may agree that the power of the art is mainly in the way the mystery; rhythm and harmony of sound and words affect the feelings of both musicians and their audience. Prophets such as Isaiah, Samson, David, and John the Baptist rapped words of righteousness under the influence of God's Spirit – yet they were not 'Christians'.

Therefore, the focus of this section will be on how the mystery, rhythm, and harmony in rap and hip-hop relate to the mystery, rhythm, and harmony of God. The word *rap* denotes the act of hitting with words sharply and swiftly.<sup>19</sup> *Hip* indicates the act of making the eyes of people open or alerting them to the issues affecting their life.<sup>20</sup>

Although some Christians see rap and hip-hop today in a negative light, the concept and practice of 'rapping,' 'hipping' and 'hopping' was actually practiced by the characters of the Bible in a fashion similar to classic rap and hip-hop. The origin of the rhyme is in the delivery of words and formation of the words through the cadence and intonation. There is a didactic delivery of rhymes, wordplay and poetry in the first chapter of Genesis ("Let there be"), which communicates the biblical concept of human origin. As our analysis has revealed, the idea behind traditional and classical Blues (the primary source of Rap and Hip-hop) was to encourage, reconcile and unburden the oppressed through uplifting, informative and healing lyrics and sound. While the Yahwestic writer in Genesis has a different focus (creation), he rhythmically delivers rhymes, wordplay and poetry to his audience. If rhythmic delivery of rhymes, wordplay

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<sup>19</sup> dictionary.com. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/RAP>. (accessed 20 June 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Dictionary.com. (accessed 20 June 2011).

and poetry is the hallmark of Rap and Hip-hop, then the person portrayed as God by the Yahwestic writer must have been an excellent rapper.

In Genesis 1, God sounds like a ‘hipper’ and the tone and authority of his words are, in fact, ‘rapping.’ Secondly, both the writer and his words are ‘hipping’ (informing) about creation, and the reaction we observe in Genesis 3:8 shows that Adam and Eve were ‘hipped’ (informed) about God and what God expected from them. Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell whether the writer was ‘hopping’ (light and quickly leaping or jumping) as he rapped his words to his audience.<sup>21</sup> One is therefore left to consider whether the musical art of actual rap and hip-hop proceeded from this God who is full of tremendous mystery and lyrical divinity.

Isaiah’s portrait of ‘rapping’ angels is also a perfect example of how Isaiah himself was a rapper, ‘hipping’ God’s prophecy to Israelites. We observe Isaiah rapping words to the House of Israel like a great poet. He asked, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning?” (Isa 33:14) In the verses that follow one can see a kind of self-response similar to the Capoeira that was rapped by Brazilian African slaves. After crying out questions about who amongst the Israelites will overcome the world, work the works of righteousness, and endure in faith and devotion to the end, we observe Isaiah rapping the answer to Israelites as if answering himself: “He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high.” (Isa 33:15–16).

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<sup>21</sup> The Free Dictionary Online By Farlex, s.v. “word you looked up,” <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hopping> accessed 20 June 2011.

Isaiah's words of liberation and his style of delivery leave us to consider some similarity between Isaiah and the rappers of traditional and classic Blues. Classic Blues is very much reminiscent of Isaiah's words. Consider the words of Delta Blues legend Blind Willie Johnson in his song "You'll Need Somebody On Your Bond." Blind Willie, just like Isaiah, is advising his audience to live well in preparation for the afterlife: "You gonna need somebody on your bond...When death comes creeping in the room/You gonna need somebody on your bond...I came to Jesus/ Like I'm weary, wounded and sad/Found in him a resting place/Now he's made me glad/Now I got somebody on your bond."

Others refers to the other individuals who appear in the Old Testament who, under the influence of the liberating Spirit of God, rap His message of justice. Apart from the prophets, there are other people who are portrayed by the Bible as 'rappers.' The Bible portrays Judges like Samson – who creatively 'rapped' words like, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, and something sweet" (Judges 14:10-14) – and kings like David as rappers. For instance, David, the writer of Psalms,<sup>22</sup> fully engrossed by the divine spirit, 'rapped:' "O sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done wonderful things, His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him."<sup>23</sup> In this text, one sees David in a spiritual moment. He is gentle in the spirit and broken to

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<sup>22</sup> Some scholars have denied that David wrote many of the Psalms ascribed to him, yet the Scriptures reveal that David wrote Ps 18 (see 2Sam 22: 2-51), was a poet (; 2Sam.1: 19-27, 3:33-34, 23:2-51), a musician (1Sam 16: 18,23; 2Sam 6: 5; Neh 12: 36, 46; Amos 6:5), and a singer (2Sam.23: 1). The Bible also reveals that David founded and organized the Temple music (1Chr 15: 16-24; 16:7, 31; 25:1; Ezra 3:10; Neh 12: 24, 46) and Hebrew psalmody (Neh 12: 24, 36, 46). According to the scripture, David was very capable as a poet, musician, singer and founder of temple musicology. He must have been one of the best musical 'rappers' of the time. \*\*Although interesting, the fact that the Bible states that David was a poet, musician, singer and founder of temple musicology that does not prove that he wrote many Psalms. And as I commented above, David cannot be considered "the writer of the Psalms" because there are many Psalms David did not write.

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 98:1.



complete fear and commitment in God. His ‘rapping’ was meant to move Israelites towards fear of and commitment to God. In this spiritual encounter, David musically rapped to uplift the oppressed, and to teach and create awareness of God’s love and wrath.<sup>24</sup>

The kind of song and dance (i.e. ‘rap’ and ‘hip-hop’) depicted in 1 Samuel 29:5 – “Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousand” – bears some similarities traditional and classic Blues in that both emphasize freedom from oppression. Although not all of the prophets, judges, and kings of Yahweh rapped musically like David, according to our observation all Old Testament prophets and judges of Yahweh “rapped” their words with mystery, uniqueness and the Spirit of God within.

Samson can also be observed in a mysterious and unique Spirit, ‘rapping’ against the Philistines while the same Spirit used some Kings like Jehu to rap against idolatry, adultery and socio-economic injustices.<sup>25</sup>

For four hundred years there had not been a prophet heard in the streets of Israel and the land of Israel was parched, thirsty, and in need of living water. However, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, a new prophet was heard on the banks of the Jordan River. John, called ‘the Baptist’, had suddenly appeared out of the wilderness, dressed in camel’s hair and wearing a leather girdle, rapping (preaching) the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

An examination of this New Testament character should focus on the place from which he emerged, his style of dress, his way of life and his manner of preaching. Like Black American slave rappers rapping against oppression while secluded in their masters’

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<sup>24</sup> 1 Sam 19:9.

<sup>25</sup> We have, for example, Jehu who, according to 2 Kings 10:30, was acting in obedience to what God had told him.

plantations, John as an Essene had fled in the wilderness to join other Essenes.<sup>26</sup> Like the 1970s rappers rapping from the Bronx streets of Harlem in New York against racism and oppression, John appeared rapping his words of justice (righteousness). Disenfranchised people came to him confessing their sins and he baptized them with water in the Jordan River. Though non-musical in his 'rapping' (preaching), like the Old Testament prophets, John communicated his message in a way that is the very portrait of a rapper of today.<sup>27</sup> His accompanying unique dress and lifestyle in a way matches the unique dress and lifestyle of some 1970s rappers and hip-hop artists.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, John's culture of dress and lifestyle complements that of Old Testament prophets like Elijah.

Though it is not clear whether Jesus 'rapped' (taught or preached) musically like David, the possibility exists given that no one knows the artistic approach of communication Jesus used while in his prayerful quiet times and secluded places. However, it is certain that, full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus began his 'rapping' in the wilderness where first he rapped against the Devil's strategies to lure humankind.<sup>29</sup> Jesus' great poetic style was beyond artistic expression. For instance, Jesus was so unique that the mysterious power in him left the blind with spiritual and physical sight.<sup>30</sup> The sick were uplifted and healed while the oppressed were given physical and spiritual

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<sup>26</sup> Olivier Manitar. <http://www.essenepirit.com/who.html>. (accessed 20 June 2011): According to the archaeological discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1946, "Essene" was a brotherhood of holy men and women, living together in a community, carried within themselves all of the seeds of Christianity and of future western civilization. This brotherhood--more or less persecuted and ostracized--would bring forth people who would change the face of the world and the course of history.

<sup>27</sup> Luke 3:11-14.

<sup>28</sup> Mark 1:6.

<sup>29</sup> Mark 5:1-19.

<sup>30</sup> John 9:20-25.

freedom.<sup>31</sup> It is clear that all that Jesus, the “Son of Man,” did and said was meant to edify the community that would later become known as His Church.

### **Prayer- A Theology of Prayer**

In Ezekiel 37:12-14 the reality is prayer brings about revival, which comes through the internal work of the Holy Spirit. Only God, through prayer, will keep his promises to open their graves and bring them up from the dead and relocate them in their land. The Church must never forget that in Jesus there is life for the spiritually disconnected, thirsting and deprived youths and young adults.

### **Spiritual Formation in an Urban Context**

In the 21st century, the “faces that are persistently knitting the quilt of American culture are becoming larger and larger with even more colorful, and diverse needles and threads of lives.”<sup>32</sup> We must be real with ourselves before *REALITY* settles in.<sup>33</sup> Villafañe reminds us, “As we enter the twenty-first century, there is no greater need for evangelicals in the city than to articulate, in word and deed, a social spirituality.”<sup>34</sup> This must be an authentic spirituality. He writes, “Spirituality, if it is to be authentic and relevant, should correlate with all of life; for after all the Spirit of the Lord, who leads and empowers, must lead and empower all areas of our life.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mark 5:25-34.

<sup>32</sup> Linda Parham, Reality Program: A Workshop for Addicts, Thayer Healthlink, Worcester, MA, November 1, 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Linda Parham, Reality Program: A Workshop for Addicts, Thayer Healthlink, Worcester, MA, November 1, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1995), 12.

<sup>35</sup> Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 12.

## **God is the Spirit of mystifying rhythm and harmony in creation and liberation**

Bloom asserts that, Out of the music emerge the gods that suit it, and they educate men by their example and their commandments.<sup>36</sup> Cheryl Keyes, another researcher, expresses her view of this form of artistic expression, saying, “The words of music seem to emerge from rhythm and harmony.”<sup>37</sup>

These philosophical and theological concepts affirm the biblical principle of the rhythmic and harmonious Spirit as He is manifested in the lyrics and music absorbed by the audience. Decades before Christianity itself, the Spirit overcame Old Testament rappers like prophets and filled them in a mysterious, rhythmic and harmonious way. In the unity of God (The Father, Son and Holy Spirit), theologians like Erickson Millard argue that it is the same Spirit who appeared suddenly where the apostles had gathered for prayer (Acts 2:2-3).<sup>38</sup> What followed was a sound like the blowing of a violent wind. This indicates his rhythmic and powerful nature, which is almighty and inspiring. His mystery is described through the eyes of the apostles. According to the Scripture, the apostles saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. He caused righteousness, or justice, to become manifest in the people that He touched and, therefore, Christians perceived the Spirit as the liberating Spirit of God in Jesus Christ.<sup>39</sup> The Spirit is the source of spiritual gifts in Christian artists, especially in spiritually gifted musicians.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>See Allan Bloom *Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon & Schuster 1987.

<sup>37</sup> Cheryl L. Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 53.

<sup>38</sup> Millard Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 262-263.

<sup>39</sup> Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 262-263.

<sup>40</sup> Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 262-263.

Once filled with the Spirit, people start showing mysterious power either in their words (talking tongues as in Acts 2) or actions. Left to be considered is the importance of seeking how to relate to the Spirit with the aim of expressing our faith in a spiritual, rhythmic and naturally harmonious way. This is a complex matter and such harmony can only be achieved once we understand how and with whom the Spirit interacts.

The liberating Spirit of God reveals his rhythm and harmony in his creativity. He is the Almighty Spirit – meaning God beyond need (Genesis 17:1). He is, in other words, a transcendent Spirit. The Spirit is dynamic and complex and humankind is modeled in the image or likeness of the Spirit (Genesis 1:26-27)

According to the Old and New Testaments, the Spirit is always in action, putting on a dramatic and impressive performance. According to Paul's natural theology (Romans 1:20), the Spirit of God is at work and revealing himself in things both seen and unseen. Men and women obedient to God's authority, whether it be hidden or clearly at play, are rewarded with His path of divine grace. When examining the Spirit from this angle – as an ever-present force guiding the choices of humankind – it is easy to view Him as the wellspring from which artists are inspired. Clearly, those touched by His inspiration have included the original rappers of Africa rapping in opposition to colonial oppressions, as well as non-Christian Black-American rappers rapping against slavery, racism and injustice.

He permeates things like African drums and miraculously inspires and heals people through the throbbing, powerful beats (cf. miraculous healing and healing through natural means as it is portrayed in Psalm 103:3).

Erickson, reflecting on the works of the Spirit, asserts that the Spirit's strategy of creation and liberation varies to some degree with the Spirit's strategy for instilling a sense of conviction and empowerment.<sup>41</sup> It's the empowering Spirit who inspired Old Testament rappers like prophets and judges with God's message. The Spirit arms the rappers with great courage, determination and the ability to articulate a convincing inspired message. Nevertheless, another implication of the Spirit's immanence is that God (the Spirit) is present and at work whether the end product is the 'lost' (disobedient to God) or the 'found' (obedient to God). We therefore have to consider whether this very involved and ever-present Spirit of God was concerned with the suffering Africans who were living under the control and oppression of white colonial governments.

The same applies with the suffering black slaves in American plantations. If the Spirit was with these people, in what ways did he respond to their suffering? Was the Spirit's liberation strategy to inspire and enable rappers who rapped against the injustices? Was this sufficient? Did it truly help assuage their suffering?

There is also a difference between the Spirit's creation strategy in man and the liberation strategy in man. In the creation strategy, the Spirit 'breathed-in' man in addition to making man in His image. However, in the Spirit's liberation mission, we have seen the Spirit inspiring and empowering. Nevertheless, prophets' limitations despite the Spirit's empowerment show the strategy to be lacking until it is fully developed and establishment in the New Testament. Don Basham, a biblical scholar, sees the completion of the liberation strategy as taking hold in Jesus Christ. According to Basham, the liberating Spirit in Christ establishes strong roots within the believer,

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<sup>41</sup> Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 262-267.

manifesting the will of God in that person.<sup>42</sup> The Spirit enables an individual to overcome limitations while responding to the demands of God. On the principle of faith in Christ (1 John 5:4-5; Gal. 2:20), man encounters the liberating Spirit in Jesus and in the principle of grace (Ephesians 2:8); the liberating Spirit in Jesus inspires man. Even in the Old Testament, the yet-to-be-established strategy of liberation was based on grace. In his liberating mission, the Spirit operated mainly under grace despite the use of conditions (law) in revealing grace.

When the all-powerful Spirit takes control of a rapper's life the rapper is able to experience unlimited power and authority. According to their experience, rappers may be aware of the fact that without unlimited power and authority they cannot overcome their limitations in living and rapping the justice of God. However, as we have seen in the Spirit's principle of grace, the Spirit does not only control Christians with religious credence. Erickson's explanation implies that any non-Christian rapper who is sincere in belief and trusts in Christ, surrendering to the control of the Spirit.<sup>43</sup>

Depending on the Spirit's strategy and purpose, non-Christian people are the core concern of the liberating Spirit. The Spirit knows how much they depend on the revealing law; yet the law only reveals and cannot save their life. As Paul implies, it is in the divine grace that the Spirit enables humankind to do what the revealing law cannot accomplish (Rom 3:23-26). Actually, it is through grace that we see the liberating Spirit attending even to the unlawful, undeserving human of the tax collector parable (Luke 18:9-14). This clearly portrays the immanence of the all-loving Spirit.

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<sup>42</sup> Don Basham. *A Handbook on Tongues Interpretation & Prophecy* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1971), 13.

<sup>43</sup> Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 267.

God's plan for man to learn and relate to Him through the internalized and manifesting Spirit is clear is rather profound and leaves us to consider whether the Church should have an appreciation and concern for those rappers who turn to Christ without Christian religious merit. The liberating Spirit has inspired them; the Spirit has chosen them. The Spirit's transcendence and immanence is of great importance – revealing God in every facet of human life and activity (God in rappers' place), in every situation being faced by man and woman (God in rapper's context), and in communication and fellowship with all of his creation (God in conversation and fellowship with rappers). It is important to note that God is not only in communication and fellowship with the 'found' (Christian believers or those who are saved), but also with those who are 'lost' (non-Christians or nominal Christians).

### **Summary**

In order to reach the newer generation the HTC will need to be at the forefront of God's movement of going forth and initiating new disciples. The older members of the church must realize that it is the younger generation that will keep the pews of the church full. Christian rap music appeals to the young person first for the melodic beats, which pulsate through their bodies and for the message that draws in the listener. Christian rap and hip-hop is not a disintegration of Christianity. Any form in which an individual can get up in front of another person and give a testimony of the greatness of God is pleasing to the Lord. God is a loving being who desires His children to spread His love and greatness through whatever medium that may be, even rap and hip-hop.

Christian rap and hip-hop reach teach and equip the very individuals for whom the music was intended. This music is the voice of the Neo Christian youths and young



adults who glorify the name of God through the spoken word with a backdrop of pulsating beats. The musicians involved in this movement are interested in reaching individuals similar to them by revealing how God has delivered them from a life of pain and sorrow to one of fearlessness and inner peace.<sup>44</sup> Christian rap and hip-hop are unique in that they educate, chastise and equip the listener with the righteousness of God's love. The words in these songs edify, encourage and inspire the youth and young adults who are drawn into the music and listen to the message.<sup>45</sup> The word of God teaches the Church that people are coming to the congregation yearning for hope. They thirst for clarity and stories that confirm the importance of the past, encourage them to keep moving forward, and assure one another that the promises of God will be kept. This will help to break down the barriers between the Church and the people in the community. When the Church teaches the congregation about human connection and mutual support, the congregation and individual members can extend themselves lovingly to the entire world.

This project stresses the need to talk specifically about how to handle our cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic differences by way of reaching out to individuals in their respective communities. Many Christians think that this is unnecessary, especially in a church. After all, Christians are all one in the Spirit. Christians know that God created each of us, so it really does not matter what color we are or what culture we are from, right? Wrong. Many Christians know nothing of each other's backgrounds, let alone who in their communities need help. We eat one another's food and wear one another's

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<sup>44</sup> Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New*, rev.ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 123.

<sup>45</sup> Todd E. Johnson Jr., ed. *The Conviction of Things not Seen: Worship and Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 23.

clothing, but we do not know one another on an individual, personal level. This is why Jesus left; so that the comforter and keeper known as the Holy Spirit would be here to enable the Church to open up to the body of Christ.

This is what Dana Wilbanks of Church Public Role is referring to when she argues, “The church’s public role and responsibility is a transformative one. The church’s theology calls and equips it to be both an agent and a sign of God’s redemptive love. The church’s role is not a matter of either/or but of both/and.”<sup>46</sup> An urban ministry should be about both action and reflection. Eldin Villafañe says this “action and reflection” should be a model in all ministries, reflecting on the Word and engaging in community-wide ministry.<sup>47</sup> This will help the ‘least of these’ feel as if they are welcome. This is how the church can reach out and affect change beyond the denominational walls.

The framework of theology for this research allowed for a narrowing approach in implementing the project design. By using the literature review, the research question and theological perspective revealed the scope of how best to develop the examination process of understanding the current framework of rap and hip-hop. Also, how these two components are emblematic of social and cultural form of justice propaganda.

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<sup>46</sup>D. Hessel, *The Church’s Public Role*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 34.

<sup>47</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1995). 86.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PROJECT DESIGN**

We begin the discussion of the concept of the project's blueprint methodology by analyzing resources and support for how to structure the project. The chapters beforehand, chapter two, and three, supplied the main blueprint, which set up the intangible foundation. In addition, this was helpful in supporting and establishing the project's outreach and evangelistic understanding correct utilizations of theological and biblical truths. We worked hard at relating the resource material to the projects values and design. We believed that the knowledge gained through the process of the Learning Team was very important; because it allowed us the opportunity to consider each person's input as major to the whole project design. The Learning Team consisted of a very diverse group of different church members. They were members with a range of levels of religious and urban evangelistic understanding and a yawning admiration for the Black-American Church's culture and history.

Five of the members were from the Roxbury area and the remaining three were from different parts of the country living in Massachusetts. My research question was posed to two urban males (both juniors in high school), one urban female (a sophomore in high school attending HTC), one male international student and one pastor attending the Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME), one female youth leader and movie director (attending West Angeles Church in Los Angeles, CA), one adult male Christian rapper and recording artist, one adult female Christian rapper and promoter (attending Grace Church in Worcester), and one female urban youth minister at HTC.

Originally, this team was structured to assist me in previous youth retreat and revival planning projects with an evangelistic- focus to the surrounding neighborhood youth. The team was very influential in providing some of the critical data for designing this project. The team enthusiastically participated in developing this project's substance using the Hexagon Diagramming and Systems Thinking Process.

During the process we established the project's theological and biblical support, which had some significant sociological issues and allowed us to see the role of the Black-American responsibilities to the church to the community. We believe the process of developing the theological framework was most difficult and a productive element of thinking and designing an evangelistic strategy for the Black Church to use Rap Music and Hip-Hop as a tool to reach youth and young adults. It was difficult but productive because it established the way the mystery, rhythm and harmony of sound and words affect both musicians and audience. Also, we came up with the concept of REALITY Rap - R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. -Renewing your Entire Attitude toward Life and Individually Transforming Yourself; (see appendix 6) because we believed that everyone's thoughts around the music and culture of rap and hip-hop need to be transformed.

The following pages outline the process by which information will be synthesized once it has been collected from HTC participants during their quest to evangelize younger community members. The main intent of the project is to validate, both biblically and theologically, the effectiveness of REALITY Rap, a program aimed at addressing the negative impact of rap and hip-hop on youths and young adults.

Brian Cross testifies that rapping has been part of the social fabric of Black America from the moment English became the language of the slaves.<sup>1</sup> Like their ancestral griots in Africa, they used highly developed speech skills, not always praising as rappers but often admonishing and ridiculing. Recognizing the importance of the spoken word and music in the lives of Black Americans, we examine a model for evangelistic development within the Church that is fine-tuned to cater specifically to the needs of Roxbury's hip-hop generation through the work of the Holy Temple Church. Central to this task is one question: "How can the music and culture of rap and hip-hop be used to unite and encourage Holy Temple Church youths and young adults to follow a holistic Christian life and worship in their communities?"

The generational gap is bridged by information and education. Both the young and the old are educated regarding social disciplines important for their Christian life. They are also well informed on the subject of music and different styles of rap (for example, 'Gangsta' Rap and Progressive Rap). Rap and hip-hop are explained in the light of the Gospel where people are taught the importance of the thrill in Christian praise and worship music and also the importance of soothing words. So, too, are they enlightened in regards to the importance of Christian symbols and signs in dress and in communication, the importance of living a Christian lifestyle as a worshiper of YHWH (values, language and conduct), and the difference between REALITY Rap and secular music (purpose, influence and the underlying dangers). Adults are also taught about youth and the community where both the young and old are guided towards a relationship with God; a process that leads to transformation of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Cross, *It's Not Salary: Rap, Race, and Resistance in Los Angeles* (New York, NY: Verso, 1993), 3.

Over the course of a number of meetings we began to discern the project design taking shape as we continue to develop the data obtained through the use of the “System Thinking Process”.

The Systems Thinking Process, Hexagon Diagramming and Causal Loop exhibits: where we first began the use of system thinking process to help collect data by requesting the learning team’s response to two questions. The first question was: How can the music and culture of rap and hip-hop be used to unite and encourage Holy Temple Church youths and young adults to follow a holistic Christian life and worship in their communities? And the second, what hinders in developing a strategy for that music and culture of rap and hip-hop be used to unite and encourage Holy Temple Church youths and young adults to follow a holistic Christian life and worship in their communities?

Our next step was to list all the different responses, separately, on hexagons post-it for each question (See Appendix 5 Illustration 1 and 2). After listing the different responses, to each question, on hexagons we then proceeded to group the responses into clusters. This step was an attempt to show the interrelatedness of the responses or evangelistic forces (See Appendix 5 Illustrations 3 and 4).

At this connection of the process the hexagon clusters the learning team and I began to comprehend the impact the System Thinking Process would have on project’s design. Creating the hexagon diagram highlighted the interrelatedness between the various evangelistic responses of music and culture of rap and hip-hop as a tool. The Learning Team provided the responses however this was representative of what was showed and discussed in the literature review, in chapter 2. The final step of the hexagon process was the formation of the causal loops. This step integrated arranging the different

labeled clusters, which represented causality basics, which work to form an effect on the other circle of basics.

The two types of loops created based on the remarks to each of the questions, what obstacle helped or hindered in developing an evangelistic strategy for HTC? The first causal loop was the Reinforcing Loop which general positive growth in developing a strategy. The second causal loop was the Balancing Loop, which created an obstacle of resistance and limitation to growth for the reinforcing casual loop. These obstacles were unintentional consequences, which were not a part of the beginning plans and must be addressed in an effort to accomplish the desired outcome (See Appendix 5). The final step was to combine the two causal loops to form a causal loop diagram (See Appendix 4). Although the two loops are on the same page they are discernible by their markings.

In appendix 5 leaders inspired by the Holy Spirit begin their work by bridging the generational gap. They reach out, not only to the youth, but also to the middle-aged and elderly in the Church as a way to build trust. They live closely with them so as to understand any and all issues of diversity (conflicting realities between the young and the old, male and female, leaders and the led, saved and the unsaved, etc.). Upon establishing a thorough understanding of the issues and differences at hand, they step in and begin to bridge the gap between thoughts, beliefs, plans, activities and expectations through reconciliation. In reconciliation, they help the involved parties recognize the areas that need acknowledgement, respect and appreciation. They also help everyone to recognize areas that need change.

Once “bridging the gap” has been successfully completed, the second step is taken of reaching out and disciplining the youths and young adults. Leaders first identify

issues affecting the spiritual life of the younger community members. They then proceed to provide psychological and spiritual therapy, a preparation for the faith “seed” which comes in the form of shared Christian faith from the leaders. They help youths not only in knowing and understanding the Gospel, but also in owning it. The process begins with identifying young men and women with leadership potential (REALITY Rap is the focus here), recruiting them for discipleship, and finally developing and forming in the youth a faith shaped by REALITY Rap Ministry. The ministry is also involved in building a relationship with other ministries in the Church. Furthermore, it helps teach youths to read the Bible as inspirational Scripture and not as an obligatory literary assignment, thus motivating them for Church ministry and training them as a ministering tool.

Another key step is that of empowering and encouraging the youth through plans, which are designed, and responsibilities are given. This facilitates self-thought, self-direction and self-help. In each of these cases, the ministry is built from the roots up (i.e. a bottom-to-top approach not top-to-bottom). The foundation of the ministry is faith in Jesus Christ, not the Church on the Bible and not on church doctrines. This ensures that attention will be paid to the interest of the majority, not the minority, in the ministry and in the Church. It also ensures that the Bible, not personal interests, serves as the source of guiding principles. Faith in Jesus Christ is the key motivator and the Holy Spirit is the dictator of situations as opposed to self-interests hidden in church doctrines, philosophies and theologies.

Supporting and advocating for everyone’s needs follows empowerment. The youth’s ideas and plans arise from REALITY Rap. Individual plans and endeavors aimed at improving socioeconomic status are also promoted.



To be in the positive scenario of the hexagon, we must first identify people with an established relationship with God (REALITY Rap and hip-hop) who could challenge the generational gap in the negative hexagon. Their work will only be effective if they build communal trust, mission and discipleship. This would help the Church to avoid the negative scenario of mistrust and disbelief in the Word of God as identified by the negative side. The words of Jesus and Paul might as well not bear fruits if the Holy Temple Church remains ignorant of the dangers of secular worship and practice in the church. Since there is resistance from the negative hexagon due to unattended socioeconomic needs and the lack of a holistic gospel, the words of prophets, like Jesus and Paul (justice and support to the needy), will fit nicely into these pre-existing voids.

The negative loop in Appendix 5, like the positive, is rooted in the generational gap. Youths and young adults in the church feel neglected and isolated. Though not as serious an issue as age, however, there is tension between the male and female leaders and those whom they lead. Not surprisingly, problems arise as the different groups seek recognition and appreciation. Misunderstanding erupts. Older Church members, for example, misunderstand the younger generation and the problems it faces. The result is ignorance. Each side holds contradictory views that result in conflicting thoughts, convictions, plans, activities and expectations. Such conflict impedes understanding in areas, which need acknowledgement, respect and appreciation. Change is necessary in order to improve this negative relationship.

Most churchgoers, especially the younger members, are ignorant of the negative messaging and dangerous influence of secular music and culture. As such, they see no problem in embracing it. This ignorance is a major barrier for the success of REALITY

Rap; it is extremely difficult to correct the young in their way of thinking once their minds have been made up. Worsening the situation, the church leaders and elders remain ignorant of the positive aspects of secular music and culture and how they can be used to spread Christian faith. Instead of acknowledging and embracing the positives of rap and hip-hop and utilizing them for evangelism, the Church dismisses everything in secular music and culture as Satanic.

False teachers also add to the negative thinking. Apart from breeding ignorance, false teachers engrain in their pupils that secular music and culture are so important that the present generation cannot survive without rap and hip-hop. This is clearly understood in the way secular music and its culture is advertised. Just think of the present technology (iPods), fashions that glorify nudity and drug use. They teach the younger generation that rap is completely harmless, when that is clearly not the case. It is easy for one to fall prey to such an attractive argument and, for this reason REALITY Rap will experience difficulty in convincing youths of the unpleasant reality of secular music and culture. Contrary to this kind of teaching is another more subtle form, which argues that REALITY Rap is merely secular music adapted by the Church. This view shows a patronizing scorn for the youth involved in transforming rap music and using the music to transform their peers.

Once the people's socioeconomic needs have been met, it will be much easier to convert them into listeners of the new, transformed rap music. However, people perceive an unfair distribution of the available resources due to discrimination, ignorance or negligence in some churches and communities. At first, people may not listen to REALITY Rap's message because of the suspicion that the music is part of a church that

does not address the members' socioeconomic challenges. We have long understood that we cannot teach the gospel to a person who is hungry, dejected and angry. We must first attend to any injustices so that justice may be witnessed and trust earned. Reversing the lack of motivation to promote ideas, plans and missions among youths would create a young and energetic army working to improve their community's socioeconomic status. Once accomplished, the success rate of REALITY will be greatly improved.

Lack of awareness of need encourages negative reaction and protest. When people believe in negative any factors their attendance and commitment begin to declines. There is too much harmful criticism and low morale.

### **Analysis of the System**

In our examination thus far of REALITY, we have discussed worship and gospel life through biblical reflection. We have learned that the youth in Holy Temple Church can experience unity and the encouragement as evidenced that is needed in holistic Christian life and worship. Individuals who have been prepared with knowledge, skills, inspiration and determination will implement REALITY. Through this team's hard work, Holy Temple Church will produce inspired, united, visionary, determined and active youth church members. This shows the importance of the relationship between the vision bearer and Holy Temple Church. The relationship is important because, among other things, it will help the vision bearer in filling the generational gap in the church.

To implement REALITY, people specifically youth who have been greatly influenced by secular music and its culture are needed to initiate the program. Once we have a group ready for action, the church's musical instruments will be used properly and

to their maximum potential. REALITY is important to the youths and church members as a full community in the Holy Spirit.

However, the most important factor in determining the success of the project is the ability to grow as a ministry. Challenges outside the Church have greater force than those within the Church. Since the program would be introduced as one of the Church's ministries, how the members perceive themselves in the community will matter. How they are perceived from outside their Church will also matter. Also, with the choice prospects in the outside community, the church will be anxious to know the teachings of REALITY and whether this ministry is out to touch and transform not only the souls of men and women, but also their socioeconomic needs addressing social and economic justice issues in the community. Whether the impression is good or bad there is always a reaction, which comes as a result of doubt and suspicion. Any backlash will be assuaged through building trust, which is primary in the REALITY plan. However, REALITY by name and form could perhaps be mistaken with the secular rap and hip-hop music and its culture. This suspicion may come from other churches and their leaders but it would be little more than a misunderstanding and the ministry should persist in its goal of reaching youths. Most people will protest out of ignorance and the moment they are provided with knowledge and gain understanding their resistance melts, thus giving way attentive support.

It is also possible that secular artists will feel threatened and fight the Church's mission. The REALITY title may connote secular music, but its efforts to weaken the hold of secular music and culture could raise a great deal of alarm within that community. However, even if perceived as a threat, the ministry will be able to open the lines of

dialogue and present its views about God's purpose of salvation and maintenance of human life. This could even result in a healthy argument or a debate that produces greater transformation.

Alternatively, the negative reaction may come from the choice recipients who are Christians in other churches and communities, despite their trust in the project's mission. They may be open to commit themselves to believing and practicing the REALITY concept but, simultaneously, they may have reservations as to whether the ministry is truly concerned with their socioeconomic needs. However, the trust building, empowerment and advocacy processes in REALITY plan should resolve this issue.

Generally, building trust, with a clear educational component, would defuse misunderstanding, ignorance and protest. As a vision bearer I will inspire both the young and the old in the Church towards the REALITY ministry, build leadership with the help of the Church, reconcile trust (with the help of the leaders and the Church), inform, teach and motivate towards action. With the help of the Church, we will facilitate empowerment and advocacy.

Certainly, all the aforementioned information has roots in systematic theology and "doing the truth." At Judea, Jesus knew "how the Pharisees had heard" his mission (John 4:1). There is always pharisaic yeast, which, like Lucifer, seduces the weak in the Church to oppose God's device for worship.

### **Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit Through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop**

Convinced of the biblical view of God's inspiring and liberating power through rhythms and spontaneous artistic harmony, I offer "Harvesting the Power of the Holy

Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” as a way to help the Church respond more effectively in her effort to reach youths and young adults. The project is strategically organized to embrace the inspiring rhythmic and spontaneously artistic harmony of the Spirit’s own rap and hip-hop culture that alerts the community to injustice and preaches the love and justice of God. The project’s aim is to reach out to the Roxbury rap and hip-hop generation and bring them back to Christ. The project will reach out to secular rappers through Christian rapping and hip-hop. The main intent of the project is to show how the Church can biblically and theologically build a program aimed at effectively addressing the negative influence of secular rap and hip-hop today’s younger generation. R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. (Renewing your Entire Attitude toward Life and Individually Transforming Yourself) Rap is part of the project. REALITY Rap consists of two, three-day workshops designed to create a transformative and renewed church community. The goal of these workshops is to bridge the gap between younger and older members of the Church through the integration of traditional Christian gospel, Black spiritual music, Rap and Hip-Hop music, and Scripture.

“Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” is a Church-based initiative, that will be locally organized, and functioning in Holy Temple Church, the Roxbury community. It will aim at serve both the Church and the community by helping to lessen divisions both within the Holy Temple Church community and within the wider Roxbury community through artistically rapping the gospel of Christ and stylistically “hip-hopping” the culture of the gospel. As was the case with the Old Testament prophets, the project will aim at encourage and facilitate the youths and young adults to rap the gospel spiritually, with courage, and dramatically

captivating inspiration. This will be accomplished mainly through music, describing and lamenting socio-political and economic injustices currently faced by the younger generation and their families. As in the rapping of Jesus, the project will encourage the youths and young adults to rap by emphasizing kindness and the sharing of values, ideas and possessions through fellowship. The initiative is to encourage the lifting up and educating of the oppressed through rapping sermons, both musically and poetically. The healing of both the oppressed and their oppressors will be achieved through musically and poetically therapeutic rapping.

With the Holy Spirit of God behind the endeavor, the whole process will involve an enthralling and inspiring component of lamentation and prophetic, pastoral and psychotherapeutic insights combined with philosophically sound theological doctrine. This inspirational force leaves both the artist and his/her audience enlightened and transformed into the way of salvation. In addition, “Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” plans to engage youths wherever they are whether in the pub or in the comforts and thrills of secular music on their iPod. The rhythm and harmony of Christian rap is designed in such a way that it offsets secular rap. The aim is for every youth and young adult to prefer the rhythm and harmony of Christian rap because of its convincing and uplifting truth, mysterious ‘tune’ and dramatic spontaneity.

We observed in chapter two that the power of God in His Spirit manifests as a mysterious rhythm and harmony, dramatically and dynamically influencing the inspired individual. All Christian rappers and their audiences are encouraged to adopt the Christ-based culture of the Spirit’s mysterious and spontaneous rhythm and harmony. As was

the case with Essenes like John the Baptist, rappers would be encouraged to have outfits designed to reflect the concept of divine mystery and artistic naturalness.

The youths and young adults will be taught divine philosophy based on biblical theology. They will be encouraged to express themselves philosophically and with a cohesive message when speaking in public and in private. In addition, “Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” would facilitate a greater sense of ownership within the church worship experience. In the principle of Eldin Villafañe’s contextualization, constituency, community, curriculum, collaboration and confession, the initiative will offer a variety of activities.<sup>2</sup> These activities will range from church and public entertainment aimed at creating awareness, to seminars and workshops aimed at education and mobilization, to programs aimed at empowerment and advocacy, to symposiums aimed at networking. These and other practices would be expected to bear results in the broader realm of Christian social development and in the moral consciousness of individuals. At the same time, “Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” hopes to further the Black church’s tradition of fostering community solidarity by providing the younger generation with a spiritual and prophetic Christian voice.

To realize the dream, “Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” will step out into the Roxbury community and aggressively provide the younger generation with a spiritual and prophetic Christian voice. However, there would also be a need for revitalization.

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<sup>2</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *Transforming the City* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 191.



As Senge in his *System thinking* implies, revitalization of the initiative is the key to the success of the initiative.<sup>3</sup>

Guided by the biblical concept of the greatest commandment, the project leaders will periodically offer entertainment symposiums.<sup>4</sup> The symposiums would offer various community artists and their audiences a place for an introduction, taste, and conviction of Holy Temple Church Christian rap and hip-hop, and a purposeful networking. In revitalizing the plan, networking in order to access the youth and young adults who have left the Church infiltrating the community's secularisms has the first priority. In the Holy Temple Church, the project would continue being responsible for the fellowship, relationship, and networking between the adult Christians and the youth and young adults. The following guiding biblical concepts are necessary for revitalizing and sustaining urban:

1. Guided by the biblical concept of creating awareness through lamentation and inspiration, the Church will revitalize its efforts to raise community awareness among the socioeconomically marginalized youths and young adults of Roxbury. Inspiring and entertaining ministry that is musical, poetic and dramatic will be staged in the church for Christian participants and out in the community for the people of Roxbury. The aim of staging these entertainments will be the conviction of people, especially the youth and young adults, by the Spirit of God through comforting and exciting Spirit-influenced rapping. The project would be responsible for the identification and spiritual care of the youth and young adult church members who are marginalized socio-economically. Because of the way

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<sup>3</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*. (New York, NY: Doubleday Currency, 1990), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 28:19.

some church members negatively view rap and hip-hop due to the secular corruption of violence and misogyny, the project will be keen to conventional elders and other church members. There will be a serious and continuous attempt to create awareness about what rap and hip-hop are and what they are not. The message in music, poetry, and dramas will be designed in a way that would provide awareness and education on what rap and hip-hop are and what they are not. In addition, there will be occasional workshops and seminars designed to provide understanding about the Spirit's rap and hip-hop in and outside the church.

2. Guided by the biblical didactic concept, revitalization of the project's educative process will follow. It will follow providing ideas like how rap and hip-hop developed as God's mysterious and spontaneous artistic means of liberation through those who were convicted by the Holy Spirit. The church through workshops and intentional Bible study will be taught the role of the liberating Spirit of God in calling and spiritual endowment. They will be taught about the role of the Spirit in God's message of encouragement, liberation, healing, and familial/racial reconciliation and unity. Other lessons will be covered about true faith of liberation and how gifted artists could employ new techniques to create and renew their own understanding of true faith and the communication of it. Educational seminars and workshops will be organized in strategic places. In the Holy Temple Church, the project will be responsible for the church inspiring Bible study.

3. Guided by the biblical concept of apostleship,<sup>5</sup> the project's mobilization process will follow the didactic process. As a result of awareness and didactic incidents, the Spirit of God will move with the convicted into the community by staging entertainments in strategic places and convening and facilitating seminars and workshops to assemble and mobilize the youth. The project will encourage and assist the willing persons in their signing up as members of the project. In the Holy Temple Church, the project will continue being responsible for inspiring, encouraging, organizing, and recruiting the willing members of the church. Then, prior to the mobilization process, there will be a-seminar designed to educate the people about the mission and goals of the project.
4. Guided by the biblical concept of discipleship, the project's induction process will follow the mobilization process.<sup>6</sup> The mobilized converts, who are expected to be youths and young adults, will go through a period of practical learning (the project's REALITY seminar) of the faith of the project, its vision and mission. The practical learning of the faith of the project is designed to be simple, detailed and practical. Through practice, the convert is expected to grow in his/her understanding of the Spirit of Christ, Christ's liberation plan and Christ's commission. More so, the convert is expected to grow in his/her understanding of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts and the project's focus and mission. There are stages for personal reflection and meditation, as well as phases where the convert's inquiries are answered in a careful and discursive way. The induction process is central to the project and is therefore both detailed and lengthy. It is

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<sup>5</sup> Mark 3:13-19; Acts 1:13-14.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 14:26; Acts 6:1.

the hope of the project leaders that, in the course of the process, the convert discovers his/her spirituality and spiritual gifts, which he/she can then nurture and utilize throughout the remaining steps of the process.

5. Guided by the biblical concept of social responsibility, the project empowerment process follows the induction process.<sup>7</sup> This process aims at not only sustaining any attraction, inspiration and sense of care and belonging the converts are beginning to feel by taking part in the project, but also empowering the persons in a way that would sustain and enable them to share and communicate their new faith through their identified spiritual gifts. To maintain the new team, the project will encourage incentives like scholarships for college education, employment through Christian organizations, etc. The project will seek such opportunities for the inducted persons with an aim of helping the persons meet their socio-economic needs. Though it would encourage giving, a greater focus will be given to showing the persons where and how to overcome difficulties, as well as providing him/her with opportunities.<sup>8</sup> The project will also link with established Christian organizations with investments (like the Salvation Army) with the aim of securing more opportunities for the inducted persons. Some of these big organizations have invested in stores and other business activities, which may have employment opportunities.
6. Guided by the biblical concept of the Holy Spirit, His mysterious rhythm and spontaneous harmony, revitalization of *Faith Ministry* follows the empowerment process. Since the purpose of the empowerment process is enabling the gifted

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<sup>7</sup> Acts 6:2ff.

<sup>8</sup> Teaching how to fish and provide an opportunity for fishing are some of Eldin's superb concepts in community development.

person to communicate and share their new faith by means of their identified spiritual gifts, attempts to stimulate the spiritually gifted persons will be made. With the help of the Holy Temple Church, the project's main sponsor, the project is expected to identify and utilize instruments and other items that stimulate the spiritually gifted persons. The project will also help the individual with any other needs that would help him/her communicate and share spiritually and artistically their faith and the culture of the gospel.

7. Guided by the concept of the Holy Spirit, His mysterious rhythm and spontaneous harmony, the project will provide training on communication skills according to spiritual gifts. The project will seek networking relationships with Christian organizations within Boston that teach music skills and, ideally, hire the organizations' teachers to teach the project's classes. The project will hold classes for poetry, music, instrument skills and drama. In addition, the project will liaise with the Holy Temple Church for general and central classes on issues affecting youth and families, Christ's message of liberation and communication principles. Through seminar training, the project would refresh Holy Temple Church Bible study leaders who, in turn, would teach the project classes. The acquired knowledge and skillfully revitalized spiritual gifts will be interspersed within a Christ-based culture of simplicity, charisma and naturalness. This culture will encourage special attitudes like transparency, accountability, calmness and straightforwardness, as well as conduct like self-control, cleanliness, hard work and non-violent behavior.

8. Guided by the biblical concept of *Kerygma*, or proclamation (New Testament theology), performance will be extended from the Church to strategic public places in the community. Under the project's ministry, socioeconomic and other issues affecting the life of the youth, families and society in general will be biblically, theologically and critically explored in the artists' performances. The prepared spiritually gifted artists will then address the furnished message in various ways. Some will address poetically, others musically, and still others through dramas and artistically planned speeches and sermons. This will be rapping against the devil and his works to open the way for the saving Christ. The artists will communicate through the project's culture based on the culture of the gospel. Members will wear their unique outfits, and demonstrate their conduct (self-control and selflessness), holy, humbled and rhythmic talk, while in performance. In so doing, the artists will become the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit in the City of Roxbury. They will stand against the secular artists and their culture that are the mouthpiece of the evil spirit of Satan.
9. Guided by the biblical mandate to "be ambassadors for Christ"<sup>9</sup>, the project advocates for the artists' cause by calling the community (persons and institutions) to support the artists' commitment to justice, peace and compassion for all. Besides community support Holy Temple Church, through the project "Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop," will grow ever stronger in its commitment to the community and spread its outreach efforts throughout the surrounding areas. In so doing, the Holy Temple

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Church will have obeyed the words of God's rappers like Jeremiah the prophet and Eldin Villafañe, the 21<sup>st</sup> century theologian.<sup>10</sup>

10. As an unconventional new approach, the project will continue researching opportunities with stronger methods for overcoming the unfolding tribulations caused by secular culture.

In summary, the System Thinking Process, hexagoning exercise advantage created a clearer picture of a promising strategy for HTC. This process helped in gathering all the data that went into this project's design. In addition, it permitted me and the team to realize that the end result of the project is not only a biblical and theological support, but can also be for evangelism.

The development of the Learning Team was group selection from membership of the Holy Temple Church, the community and associates from class who had a range of expertise related to Black-American Church functions. The main function of the learning team was to assist me in the creation of a youth and young adult ministry using the music and culture of rap and hip-hop. I served as the facilitator while the learning team had full participation in the all discussions concerning the System Thinking Process as well as part of the hexagon diagramming and casual loops creation. Most of this was done via telephone and emailing because I had relocated back to Worcester and many of learning team members were still in Roxbury. The members of the learning team were very active in helping me in this project. Several of the members are still using the learning team

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<sup>10</sup>Jeremiah. 29:7. According to Jeremiah, "We seek the welfare of the city to which God has sent us." See also Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 1-3.

approach as a part of the church ministry and working to continue to be system thinkers and doers.

The project's methodology design is made up of many inputs. The first source was Chapter 1, describing the problem setting the historical influence, and present-day environment. Chapters 2, and 3, provided the conceptualizations by creating a literature review and theological framework research and the learning team's input, discussions and further evangelistic team study. The team believes that through this process, some definite answers to the questions raised in the introduction can be found. The causal loop outcome is the basis for the conclusion and recommendations. In the final chapter we will convey our findings, conclusion and future plans to the questions of how music and culture of rap and hip-hop can be used to unite and encourage Holy Temple Church youths and young adults to follow a holistic Christian life and worship in their communities.

With any form of research is it even possible to anticipate the outcome or results? Really the only thing that is possible is to come up with supposition, theories and hypothesis. Unfortunately the true integrity of the research is during the completion of the research has yield results be it favorable or unfavorable. The anticipated outcome is just that anticipation, but rather it is a guess of sorts until further more concrete information can be revealed.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS**

The Holy Temple Church's successful implementation of the findings from "Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop" depends on the perception and conviction of the church. If implemented, it will be done a sort of demonstration or pilot program that may undergo further development. It is likely that hopeful Christians in Holy Temple Church will see "Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop" as a new approach, breaking the cycle of the church's conventional approaches in reaching out or sustaining current church members. Regardless, both positives and negatives will accompany the approach. That being the case, there is a need for continuous research.

As explained in Chapter One, the Roxbury community is experiencing constant socio-cultural and economic changes that greatly impact the local youths and young adults. Despite their best efforts to receive encouragement and inspiration, these young men and women rarely find them, so they are left vulnerable and in despair. Fortunately, it is reasonable to believe that because a good number of them have left the church due to its seemingly useless and obsolete nature, those very same deserters will return to the church the moment they discover it is providing assistance, encouragement and joy to their peers. In the church, they would know the truth about God through a focused biblical theology, godly modeling, and meaningful field training. In God's truth, the youth would experience God's divine power, which would inspire them. God's power would turn their human talents into spiritual gifts, which the Holy Spirit would use to

liberate not only their brothers and sisters from the Roxbury community but also the entire Roxbury community.

According to six young men and women interviewed at Holy Temple Church, the cause of the youth's sense of helplessness and despair in the church is a lack of genuine love.<sup>1</sup> As Carson Pue asserts in his book *Mentoring Leaders*, the youth need to be led out of the situation of helplessness and despair through genuine and enduring love. This encourages them desire the reality of the vision for a better life.<sup>2</sup> Since what is impossible to them is possible to the omnipotent Spirit of God, the truth of God through the church's genuine and enduring love would assure them (with the necessary determination and persistence) in being who they are. The Spirit of God, through conviction, will find a way in them and transform their talents into gifts. Despite those youths and young adults who have fled from the church to city life, there are others who are already in the grips of the Holy Spirit, continuing to show genuine and enduring love. By indisputably meeting the youth's needs in the way of the Spirit and helping the youths in discovering their relationship with God, the church will have also responded to the problem of lapsing membership.

### **The Chance for the Church's Future Survival**

"Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop" has the potential to become the church's source of revival through the Holy Spirit. The "Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop" project seeks to encourage the Holy Temple Church, as well as the entire Roxbury

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<sup>1</sup> In Holy Temple Church, I interviewed three young women aged 20-25 years and three young men aged between 19- 26 years.

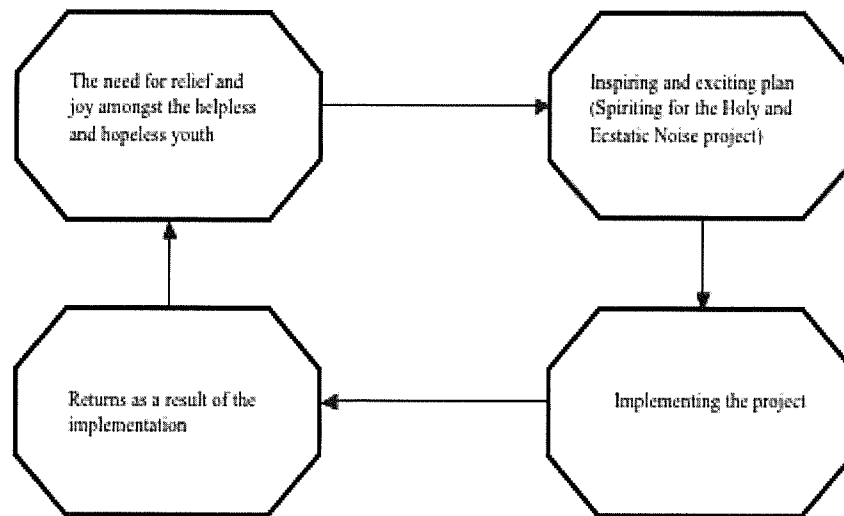
<sup>2</sup>Carson Pue, *Mentoring Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 57-101.

community, to serve as the ideal model for mentorship at this time of high technology and New Age culture. This project's impact will expand beyond the church community. The Roxbury community in its entirety will experience "Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop" as an agent of hope as it reaches out to console the rap and hip-hop generation.

Along with the Christian rap and hip-hop artists' encouraging, informative and healing music, there will develop a new attitude among their church-going audience (reflected in their unselfishness and concern for one another). Just as hundreds of worshippers in the Temple followed Jesus after he healed the crippled man, it is expected that many young men and women would be attracted to the transformation-inducing environment. They would return to church, not only because it promises love and justice, but also because it serves as a practical attempt to love and treasure in Christ's justice. The church would have new members and the community's level of corruption, immorality and crime amongst the youths and young adults would, in all likelihood, decrease due to the new attitude amongst the transformed. This anticipated result is illustrated on the next page:

Despite coming to the Church in search of healing and liveliness, the helpless and hopeless youths and young adults leave the Church without inspiring, healing words and vigor.

1. The researcher has seen the need for relief and joy amongst the helpless and hopeless youths and young adults.
2. Through the project the researcher has come up with an inspiring and exciting plan of imparting the gospel.
3. The researcher will be implementing the plan.
4. The researcher therefore expects returns as explained above.



**Figure: 1**

### ***The Anticipated Project's Outcome***

“Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” is designed to reach the secular rap and hip-hop generation through relief and enthusiasm, thereby attracting them to church. It is anticipated that not all newcomers will like the culture of Christian rap and hip-hop due to its discipline of self-control and responsibility. However, since there is no lasting hope in secular rap and hip-hop, it is predicted that those who join the project will remain involved in the project because of its environment of encouragement, enthusiasm and vivacity. Some may end up taking advantage of the interactive relationship as gofers of Satan amongst saints. Given that

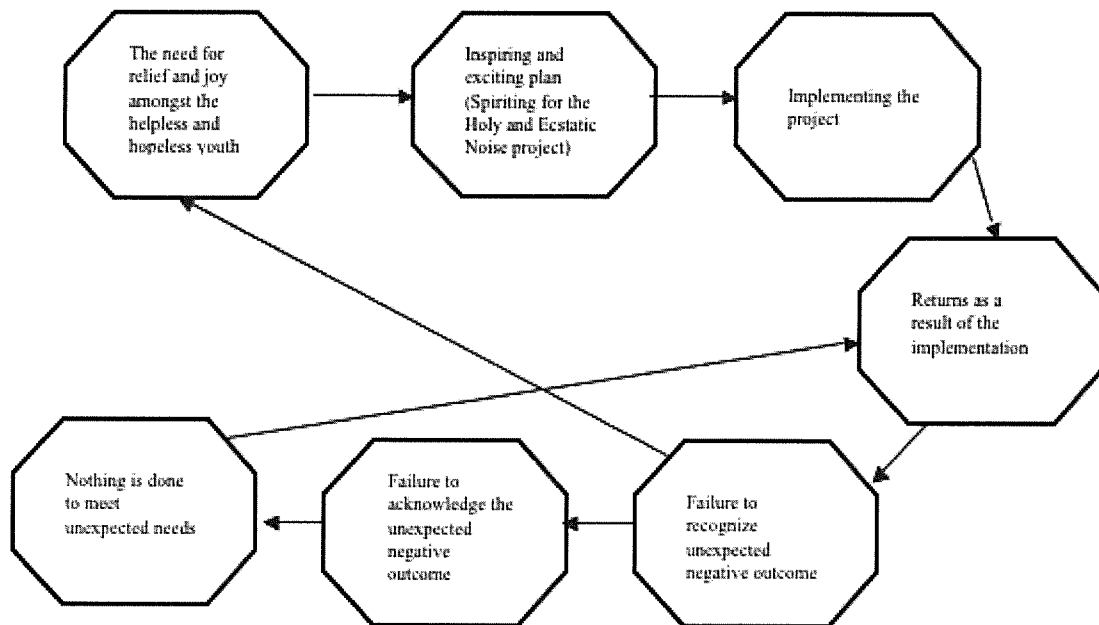
the project will lead to a critical and exhaustive spiritual examination and initiation (which would help the converted youths and young adults in discovering and developing spiritual gifts), it is probable that it will be sought after and spiritually incapacitated.

Although the project's strategy of rap and hip-hop would be spiriting (and thus winning over) the secular rap and hip-hop generations for Christ and his ministry, the fact remains that some Church members will oppose the strategy. This is possible because of the Holy Temple Church's belief that rap and hip-hop are a cultural promotion of violence and misogyny. It is therefore anticipated that some members, especially those who hold the conventional view, will see the strategy as an attempt to incorporate the culture of violence and misogyny in the Church. However, since one of the key concerns of the project in the Church will be creating awareness of what rap and hip-hop are and are not, as well as strengthening the relationship between the Church's older and younger members, the resistance by the Church is likely to fade with time, as with time the Church will see the need for integration of both older and younger members.

Given that the strategy is an unconventional new approach, unseen obstacles are expected. A positive outlook must be taken: where there are unseen obstacles there are unseen opportunities. If these opportunities are seized, they can weaken the threatening forces while maximizing the project's course to success. Since the project is committed to continuous research, there will be ample opportunity to identify and ameliorate any backlash or obstacles that may unfold. The counterproductive development and its redemptive approach are illustrated below:

The researcher strongly believes that issues like drugs and lawlessness amongst the youths and young adults not only result from a complex system in Massachusetts, but also globally. Spiritually, is not only an issue of the physical globe system, but also an issue connected to the complex system of the celestial world. According to these convictions, rooted in Senge's view of systems thinking, the researcher finds:

- Negative outcome if researcher fails to recognize the unexpected consequence and its outcome (as explained above).
- Negative outcome if researcher fails to acknowledge the unexpected consequence and its outcome
- Negative outcome if researcher fails to do something else to meet the needs of the unexpected.

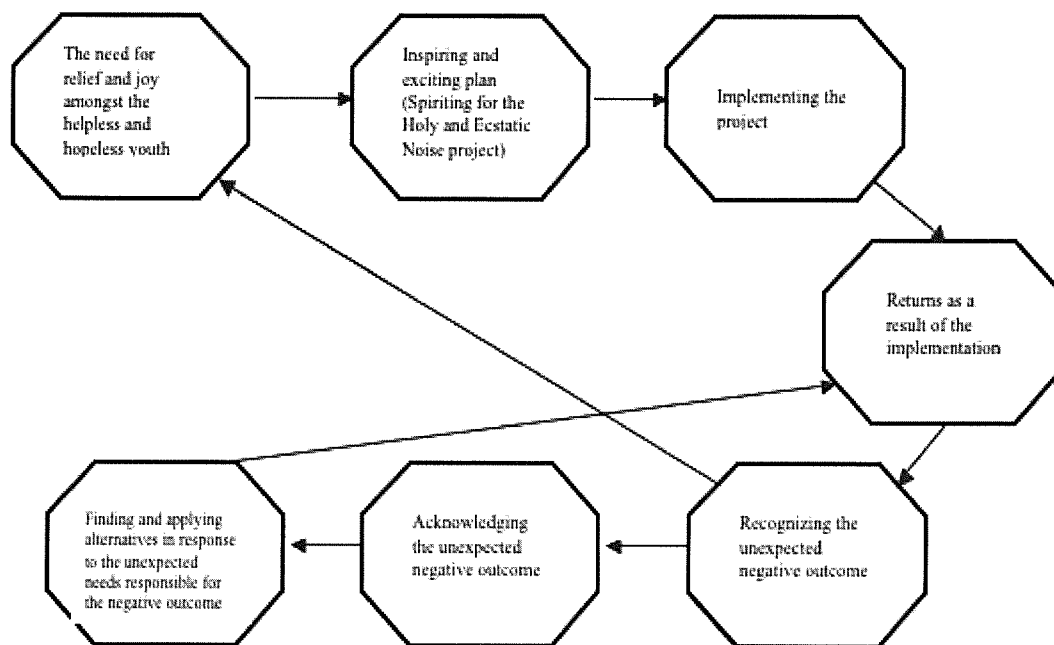


**Figure: 2**

*Counterproductive developments*

Mainly, opposition leading to negative consequences would build up as a result of the attitude of those recipients. Some of conservative Church leaders are likely to oppose the plan due to what they may think of as “secular invasion” while the youths and young adults may resist the project’s discipline because of the notion that it is all about “rap and hip-hop”. However, since it is all about Christ in the new approach of inspiring, teaching, healing and reconciling, the researcher would have a redemptive approach with alternatives responding to the unexpected. The researcher will:

- Ensure recognition of any indication and symptoms of uncertainties.
- Acknowledge any revealing improbability of the recipient’s thoughts and actions.
- In order to overcome their fears, encourage them (preaching and use of personal relationships). For their attitude, researcher will teach them and make use of life examples through illustrations and demonstrations.



**Figure: 3**

*Redemptive approaches*

### **Determining the Project's Support**

From the very beginning, the project will require the support of the Church and the community in order to succeed. How then would the Holy Temple Church gain the confidence needed for the consideration and support of the REALITY Rap project?

The interest of the Church should be that of the liberated Spirit of God and that the helpless and hopeless youths and young adults may find rest and hope in Christ Jesus. To ensure this interest of the project, it is important to first identify the interests of the Church. The project's vision bearers will begin by collecting information from the Church with an aim of knowing from its leaders what the Church feels about the life of the community's young men/women and what the Church leaders can do to ameliorate the challenges faced by the young community members. The project's leaders will also aim to know where, when and how the Church and her leaders want the project to help the Church. Then the project leaders will endeavor to know how the Church can help or support the project in helping the Church. The project's support by the Church will depend on the interest of the Church, especially its leadership. The project's vision bearers (having sought and learned the Church's willingness to mentor them and support the project for the youths and young adults of the community) would therefore continue encouraging the Church and its leadership.

The more the Church discusses the project's concern at various levels, the more the concern is understood. Understanding the concern is important because, despite the Church's interest in the project's strategy, some elders may still have the mentality that the idea is as ungodly and misleading as secular rap and hip-hop. However, the number of those in resistance will decrease with every meeting mainly because of the discussions



on the nature of rap and hip-hop. However, the project leaders will continue to emphasize the fact that, despite the corruption present in secular rap and hip-hop, the art and culture is godly when used in a constructive and liberating manner. This information is expected to melt not only the resistance of the opposing Church leaders, but also said leader's loyal supporters.

Support will also depend on what the Church sees as the project's achievements and ensuing opportunities. Research requires concise information, including a need to gather as much information as possible about the youths and young adults' problems and how best to resolve them before the project begins. This is why the project's vision bearer has taken time to gather, analyze and conceptualize information related to the youths and young adults' problems of helplessness and hopelessness. Nevertheless, the dynamism leading to the youth and young adult problem in the church (and in the community) is extremely complex. Therefore, there is a need to continue researching even after the project starts. Asking questions and collecting information have proven useful and the project will continue to do so in preparation for the unfolding but unforeseen circumstances. Despite scheduling conflicts affecting the interview process, there will be continuous attempts to interview leaders in various churches and charitable organizations within Roxbury about their experience in responding to the youth and young adult issues in the community.

One of the expected outcomes is that most church leaders will embrace the project's idea of reaching out to and mentoring the drifting youths and young adults. However, counterproductive developments will always be present due to human limitation to see and know what is possible for getting the attention and mentoring youth

and young adults. Therefore, as the project continues, counterproductive development and redemptive approaches will become integral to the process. Though, in a diminishing manner due to the redemptive approaches, the question of “why rap and hip-hop” will continue to reverberate. The project will continue to make its end-goal clear to the recipients as well as teach them the importance of focusing more on the purpose rather than the approach. This effort goes hand in hand with the exploration of other churches and organizations in Roxbury applying similar or different strategies in reaching and mentoring youths and young adults. The purpose of exploration would be to facilitate the project leaders in learning from the results of any and all applied strategies.

The Church is made up of the old and the young, two populations with very different cultural preferences and realities. Perhaps this is why a good number of the youth and young adults are attracted by the music of the “New Age culture” more than the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Charles Wesley songs. According to observations in Holy Temple Church, some of the Church’s relational cracks are a result of cultural and educational gaps. Most of the leaders in Holy Temple Church have real-life experience with poverty and the Roxbury ghetto; however their experiences and perceptions differ from those of the researcher who was born in the South. To the researcher, the reality of individualism is too much to the extreme of most of the church leaders – those who have suffered other people’s rejection due to bias, indifference, and exploitation seem not to care about others despite having learned lessons implying otherwise from their own experience.

Though in the leader’s mind there is something compelling them to care, the New England way of life induces them to mind their own business (individualism). It is the same with the young and old, especially elders and church leaders. By not taking time to

understand the situation and experience of the young, the elders become extreme in their judgment and vice-versa. This difference affects the way the church will perceive the project, especially during and after implementation time when unseen forces start challenging progress. It is possible that people will base their judgments on their experience regardless of what others encounter. Yet, some of the challenges (like short-term counter-productive consequences) are sure to come in any process of change. Therefore it is anticipated that there will be some relational cracks due to age and cultural gaps. However, according to the project's projection and teachings, the main concern will be the care the project will give to the suffering regardless of their cultural values. The project will continue with the attempt to educate the church and the community about the importance and purpose of identity by continuing to reaching out to and guiding the suffering youths and young adults.

The project's vision bearer will therefore continue teaching Church leaders how Holy Temple Church is prone to uncontrollable forces if not considered a system as a whole. Our aim will be to ensure that Church leaders are free to know where in the system things are that discourage youth and young adult membership. One must simply continue teaching faith and encouraging hope in the case of things, which Holy Temple Church and Roxbury community leaders cannot comprehend. This experience can be used as an opportunity to learn and ask questions (which will, in turn, help uncover what to do in times of counter-productivity).

One expects conventional questions, mainly because of the promotion of God's attitude towards rhythm and harmony's place within the Church body. The responses will let conservative leaders see how the Church functions like a human body or any other

complex system; with a heartbeat (without which nothing else in the body system would be in the harmony and fit to survive). The Spirit of God is the heart of the Church and as the heart of the Church, is only alive (present) when the Church is experiencing the Spirit's heartbeat. In the same manner, the Spirit has full control of the Church only when the heart of the Church is beating normally.

Therefore, by continuing to teach leaders in the Church and the community about such things as how the heartbeat of the Church is as mysterious as a human heartbeat, we expect to see leaders focusing on how the mystery of God's Spirit relates to the reality of nature in all situations and things. Our goal in educating Church leaders is to create leaders with an unconventional attitude by thinking outside the box facilitated by the Holy Spirit of God. As bearer of the project, one must teach and inspire the leaders with hope that they will advance themselves and their faith community in the new attitude of unconventionality.

With the new leaders of this new attitude, a Bible study class will be implemented that opens with the contextualization of the Church curriculum, (soon to be developed specifically for the Church youths and young adults). Once this curriculum takes effect and those ranging from 15-21 years of age enroll, it is likely that both the Bible study group numbers and Church membership numbers will grow simultaneously. The program "Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop" will be an umbrella for smaller groups with different activities. Roxbury Rappers of Attitude, for example, will have an aim of reaching the youths and young adults through the inspiration and excitement of the Rapper's love and justice.

It is expected that participants will see the difference between secular rap and hip-hop and Christian rap and hip-hop through nurturing genuine selflessness and lasting love (forgiveness). This will be made reality through the discipline and practice of “doing to others what you would want others to do to you.” From these teachings, one expects both the Church’s leaders’ new attitude and the discipleship of the youths and young adults to understand how the history of the younger generation may have impacted them. Guided by this knowledge, both Church leaders and the youths and young adults are expected to lead in changing the history of Holy Temple Church to more faithfully fit the background of the youths to whom the Church has been ministering both inside and outside the Church.

It is my observation that most of the churches in Roxbury have no knowledge of the history of their younger members Holy Temple Church has the same problem and therefore both the Church leaders and the disciplined youths and young adults need to reflect upon and chronicle the history of young rap and hip-hop artists, tracing rappers who rapped for freedom during slavery, the reconstruction period, and in the streets of Harlem, New York in the 1970s. The aim of reflecting and chronicling is to help both the leaders and inquisitive young disciples know how the rap and hip-hop generation began and understand the true roots of rap and hip-hop before it became increasingly secular and destructive.

Holy Temple Church leaders are an important component to the main Roxbury community system. As they continue teaching and encouraging, one expects the leaders to open their eyes and see that the drifting away of the younger Church members is not wholly disadvantageous, rather it indicates a leverage point. The challenge is intended to

open the leaders' eyes to see opportunity in the helpless and hopeless youths and young adults who are desperate and ready to entrust their lives to anyone willing to serve as a savior. The secular world will lure them, but never own them; the world has no rest to offer to the restless youngsters. Not even the Church would own them if she approaches the youth and young adults in a parsimonious and exploitative approach, just as the secular world approaches them.

By relying on the Spirit's approach the Church would see what God sees as the needs of the distraught youth. The Church would also have the vision of God's Spirit and therefore the Spirit's courage, determination and persistence in liberating the youths and young adults. In their spiritual relationship, we expect leaders and Christians in Holy Temple Church to rekindle their faith, expressing it as a dynamic of the Spirit of God in them. As a result of their regenerated faith, one would expect great impact upon the Church's attempt to support the program of reaching out to and mentoring the youngsters of the Church and the Roxbury community.

Since we have systems thinking as one of the philosophies guiding the project, Senge's thought in *The Fifth Discipline* will be introduced to the Church pastor and his Church leaders. Once interest is seen, the pastor will be encouraged to start a special class for all of his Church leaders; a continuous program of systems learning. The pastor and his leaders will see the need for a week of study in every month entitled "Systems Learning by Leaders of New Attitude (SLLONA)". These Church leader meetings are expected to last two hours, one week per month to study various books of management and administration (one book being Senge's *The Fifth Discipline*). In the course of the study, one expects the leaders' "how" questions to prevail over the "what" questions.

However, based on Senge's concept of systems thinking, leaders must first be acquainted with the issues at hand (question of what), which need to be acted on before seeking to know "how" to respond to the issues. The leaders' attitude of seeking to know the nature of the upsetting issues in and outside the Church is expected to gradually grow.

In the "what" approach of understanding the cause of issues, Church leaders would find themselves in the heart of the Church (the Holy Spirit as per my explanation in this chapter). The illuminated pastor and his leaders will care about where and how the Holy Temple Church youths and young adults connect to all other ministries of the Church and what can be done to avoid counterproductive reactions and consequences.

Looking at the threatened future of the Church in relation to a lack of expression of spiritual gifts (the heartbeat), one would expect new ideas to stir in each leader participating in SLLONA. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is the key to the future of the Church. In deep thoughts, the dynamic and dramatic power of the Spirit convicts hearts of the rap and hip-hop generation through compelling and relentless words, thoughts, and the lifestyle of Christian rappers (as presented in the "Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop" program). The power of the Holy Spirit of God and the Spirit's manifestation is not only expected to be present in the leaders of the new attitude leadership, but also in those whom they will be leading (i.e. the Churchgoers). In other words, leaders and their followers are inspired enough to express how they think the Spirit of God can do his work.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit's action through the Church and the gifted, leaders "Of New Attitude (SLLONA)" is that models of leadership are all about taking the initiative for the benefit of others and not for one's personal interest. In this particular

program, one can see clearly how servant leadership is above culture and ethnicity. (By servant this does not imply serving only disciples of God but all people – for according to the Bible they are responsible for and accountable to the life of their neighbors despite their neighbors’ disobedience of God’s Word.)

### **Impact on Holy Temple Church**

The Church and the program leaders will grow intellectually and spiritually as a result of the Church and the program’s activities, especially those based on redemptive action. Although it may not occur rapidly, the program “Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” will experience growth because of the spiritual, moral and financial support by the Church. However, to further foster levels of support, the program will continuously strengthen the leader studies, communication and community relationship. In addition, the program leaders will have a study program that ensures research and continuous learning by all Church leaders. This educational Church program (which will be facilitated by “Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop”) will help in keeping the Church leadership team and the program team united and focused on common challenges, interests and missions.

Leaders with a new attitude and new ideas will come to understand the systemic nature of the Church and leadership development – hence the Holy Temple Church and her leaders will rise to the level of spiritual revitalization based on redemption found in Christ through the Spirit of God. In addition to providing liberation, the Spirit will illuminate for the Church and her leadership a perspective in which the Church is viewed



as a system; where each part of the whole is inextricably connected and affects the other. They would learn to view things from the Church system's heartbeat throughout, how things connect to various organs and make the Church. Since the Church leaders would be supporting their Christian rappers in the "Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop" program, I think the leaders would also be 'rappers' in soliciting for their rappers' support. In other words, like Haggai the prophet, both the Church and her youth will rise to the occasion as prophetic rappers of God's peace (Hag 2:9).

As a result of the Church and the program's faithful trust in the Spirit of God, the Church will have reclaimed, rehabilitated and empowered youths that are rapping poetically and musically against violence, misogyny, racism and injustice. The Holy Temple Church and her leaders will stand behind the youths, supporting them in every way possible. The Church rappers will stage their rap and hip-hop in the Roxbury community with the aim of reaching their brothers and sisters in the Roxbury secular rap and hip-hop generation. Where the Spirit of God is allowed to take his full control, none dares to challenge the Spirit. We observed in Chapter Three that the Spirit in the faithful disciple commands demons out of people in various ways. Depending on the Spirit manifesting in the faithful disciple, demons of fear, ignorance and weakness, are driven out of people through inspiration, education and empowerment. Therefore, as the Spirit of God continues rapping God's truth of liberation through the Church rappers in the Roxbury community, youth adhering to secular rap and hip-hop culture in Roxbury will be won over by the enormous and inspirational power of the Spirit in the gifted Christian rappers. The expansion of the rule and reign of God will be witnessed.

Furthermore, as the Church and the program continue to win new souls through rap and hip-hop, and induct and empower the new converts, the Church, through “Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop,” will also reach willing participants in the community for more support – both morally and financially. Mainly, the aim of soliciting support will be to ensure a strong foundation for the program’s endeavor towards self-sufficiency. At the same time, the program’s research team will expand their study of the feedback loop in such a way that fully covers the community. Having helped the Church respond to some rebellious reactions in both the faithful and secular communities, the program’s research team will be on high alert for possible counterproductive consequences (in and outside of the Church). However, before any constant state of learning, the project will encourage the Church to ensure a strategy of introducing and developing herself towards compelling new ideas whenever her studious leadership senses any rebellious feedback. The Holy Temple Church will then be a Church with a new attitude and a cherisher of the Holy Spirit’s spontaneity, dynamism, liberating creativity and modernity.

### **Launching of the Project’s “Rappers with Attitude” to the Roxbury Community**

Realizing through testing the groundwork in the community that the project’s name “Harvesting the Power of the Holy Spirit through Transforming Rap and Hip-Hop” would only be attractive to the Church, rappers will be called “Roxbury Rappers of Loving Justice R.E.A.L.I.T.Y.” (A name friendly to the secular rappers and attractive to their followers). Despite already having tested the groundwork, the project will consciously take considerable time to first learn the Roxbury community and its open-air

performance areas, before the official launch. We will again take some extra time learning the city's make up, as well as the needs and interests of its youths. Then through the help of our Church leadership, we will revisit influential community leaders who are concerned with the life of the Roxbury community. The aim of the visit would be to create awareness of the Church's project purpose and to appeal for support.

Administration, security, religious leaders and organizations related to Roxbury youths would be among the key targets of these visits. Before launching the program, we will ensure advertisement backed by a forceful performance, which will aim at convincing and attracting any uninterested youths.

Simultaneously, other actions will be taken in preparation for launching the project in the community. The rappers' website title will be changed from e-holy templates to e-rappers of loving justice. As with the name of the program, the aim is to use a name that is friendly to the secular rappers and attractive to their followers. The program will then be advertised through the Internet, pamphlets and local television for the launching performance at the Dudley Square open grounds. On the performance day a good turnout is expected because of a conscious effort to recruit attendees prior to the launching of the project. The set of the performance platform will be uniquely designed and well organized because of our focused attention and careful commitment to detail. Seats will be made available and standing room will fit five times as many people as those sitting. Police officers are expected to be walking attentively round the arena to ensure maximum security. To ensure strong community relations through the community influential leaders, it is expected that the state governor and the city mayor be amongst

the dignitaries honoring the event. E-vites in the program's website will also announce launching.

The launch will include rappers' poems, dramatic performances, musical presentations and speeches. There will also be an important speech by the Church discussing the expectations for the project. The speech will explain the project and its purpose of recovering Roxbury youths and young adults back to their self by developing their God-given gifts.

As a result of this implementation, visitors will become interested in the ministry. As the number swells, Bible studies will be launched in the homes of the leaders in various sections of the community represented by program leaders. The Bible study program will be named "The Rapper's Guide" – a name that will attract curious young people in each section of the community. The focus will be on the rapping of Jesus and Paul. The program begins with the Gospel according to Luke, then Acts and 1 Corinthians. The aim of Luke and Acts is to prepare the participants for Paul's profound truth and call for a higher understanding of hope based on faith in God. It is expected that participants will love the study and encourage their friends to attend. This home fellowship will grow and become a gateway to our program and, therefore, the Church itself. The first week has an expected attendance of 3-7; the following week, 7- 12. Any number beyond 12 should provoke the Church to think of a satellite Church in leaders' homes.

Generally the project, through the Church, will continue with the ministry – relying on the Holy Spirit in the project's ability to recognize, admit to and address the unintended negative returns. Project leaders will ensure a strong relationship with the

Holy Temple Church, in turn ensuring a planned fellowship of men and women growing in unity. As young men and women are motivated and taught through life-on-life discipleship, acts of kindness and biblical models of leadership, they will in turn show up in the Church. The program would continue to empower and support them until they take the lead in the areas of ministry that the Spirit of God has put before them. While the ministry of the project and the Church expands, those faithful over the areas delegated to them will be given greater responsibility. Holy Temple Church of Roxbury, MA would therefore have Church elders and deacons trained through the “Rap and Hip-Hop” method.

Although the project’s approach involves drawing youths and young adults back to the Church through rap and hip-hop, the core aim is creating a liberated youth, not just a churchgoing youth. Rather than solely preaching theology, the aim of the project is to incorporate theology into every aspect of the program; relating theology to the situations being experienced by the youth and young adults and using the related theology in addressing issues they face. Since God is a sustaining God one will endeavor to see that the rehabilitated youth and young adults have become active in family life and child rearing. Since God is all loving and a just God, the program will ensure that the rehabilitated youth have a sense of legacy in parenting and social responsibility. God is a merciful and compassionate God and therefore the project will ensure the development of ethics and community commonality in the rehabilitated youth.

However, it is evident in the Bible that not all aspects of individualism are bad, especially self-government in which each human being is responsible for himself/herself before Jesus Christ (Rom 14:10-12; 2Cor 5:10; Rev 20:11-14). The program will

therefore help hold the rehabilitated youngsters accountable for their actions. This includes assistance in making decisions which require not only social, but also individual responsibility. However, individualism is not to the exclusion of community benefits. Living in such a multifaceted social situation, which is quite challenging, rising leaders in such a context will not only require social transformation, but also social conformity. This is a must if the program is to genuinely embrace the kingdom apologetic of *koinonia* (*i.e. fellowship*). Without embracing and including the “other,” attempts to develop leadership become a means of advancing one’s personal efforts and dreams. What excite people about Christ are His personal experiences and struggles that portray a character of great composure and introspection. Christ has room for all, whether righteous or sinful, weak or strong, poor or rich, red or green. It is impossible to use His kingdom as an excuse for a lack of embrace and inclusivity -- because it is his embrace and inclusivity, which make his kingdom. In fact, his kingdom is made up of characters like transformed tax collectors, prostitutes, thieves and poor people like Lazarus, to name a few. Therefore, without a context for His kingdom, true leadership development and influence would be impossible.

The test of this research will come in form of an educational toolkit all faith-based organizations can use in order to meet not only the spiritual needs but the other component of true health & wellness the mind, body, and spirit connection. Although, all three are separate, but equal they function better as team for the overall better for youth and young adults.

## APPENDIX 1

### HEXAGON RESPONSE TO QUESTION

**How can the music and culture of rap and hip-hop be used to unite and encourage Holy Temple Church youths and young adults to follow a holistic Christian life and worship in their communities?**

Reaching the youth and becoming one with them
Living with them and understanding issues of extreme diversity
Bridging the gap between thoughts, convictions, plans, activities, and expectations
Helping in areas which need acknowledgement, respect & appreciation
Helping in areas which need change
Identifying the affecting issues
Providing psychological & spiritual therapy
Sharing Christian faith
Help in knowing and understanding the Gospel
Help in owning the Gospel
Educating and developing leadership
Using the ministry to help youth read the Bible as Scripture and not as literature
Motivating youth and young adults for Church ministry
Using them as a ministering tools
Educating the other social science (e.g. sociology, psychology, etc.)
Educating youth and older generation about music
Teaching about different styles of rap (e.g. gangsta rap and progressive rap)
Explaining rap and hip-hop from the light of the Gospel
Teaching adults about youth and the community
Guiding people to have a relationship with God
Transformation of life
Designing a plan, giving responsibilities, and facilitating self-sufficiency
The ministry from the grass roots
Redistributing the available resources
Advocating or promoting their self-thought, self-plan
Prayer
Talking to God
Rap/Hip-hop Bible study
Testimonies
Understanding God

## APPENDIX 2

### HINDRANCES RESPONSE TO QUESTION

**How can the music and culture of rap and hip-hop be used to unite and encourage Holy Temple Church youths and young adults to follow a holistic Christian life and worship in their communities?**

Neglected and isolated youth
Misunderstanding youth and the problems they face
Conflict between the gaps of thoughts, convictions, plans, activities, and expectations
Conflicts between parties involved
Lack of understanding, which needs acknowledgement, respect, and appreciation
Conflicts due to lack of understanding and change
Ignorance about the dangers of secular music and culture
Ignorance about the positive things in secular music and culture
False teachings about positive things in secular music and culture
Lack of support in the people's socioeconomic needs
Unfair redistribution of the available resources
Needs and unsettled conflicts
Lack of motivation and promotion for their values
People's reaction and protest
Poor attendance by the recipients
Poor commitment
Too much negative criticism
Low morale
Little or no achievement
Almost no difference (life in 'status quo' – dead worship and a hypocritical life as secular culture engulfs youth in the church)
Lack of leadership skills
Unwillingness to participate
Cliques
Lack of understanding diversity
Lack of Wisdom
Unwilling spirit
Lack of understanding
Lack of knowledge of cultural contexts
Lack of bible knowledge



## APPENDIX 3

### HEXAGON CLUSTERS

**How can the music and culture of rap and hip-hop be used to unite and encourage Holy Temple Church youths and young adults to follow a holistic Christian life and worship in their communities?**

<b>Group 1: Praying for God</b>
Prayer
Talking to God
Rap/Hip-hop Bible Study
Testimonies
Understanding and Excitement about God
<b>Group 2: Reaching out and Discipleship (Mathew 28:18)</b>
Identifying the affecting issues
Providing psychological & spiritual therapy
Sharing your Christian faith
Help in knowing and understanding the Gospel
Help in owning the Gospel
Educating & developing leadership by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First identifying young men/women with potentials of leadership (REALITY RAP is my Focus)</li> <li>• Recruiting them for discipleship</li> <li>• Developing&amp; forming in them a youth faith of REALITY RAP Ministry</li> <li>• Building relationship between the ministry and other Ministries in the Church</li> </ul>
Using the ministry to help youth read the Bible as Scripture and not as literature
Motivating them for the Church ministry
Using them as a ministering tools
<b>Group 3: Informing &amp; Teaching (James 3:1-17 and 2 Timothy 2:23-25; Psalm 19-10)</b>
Educate both regarding the other's social science (e.g. sociology, psychology, etc.)
Educate youth and older generation about music
Educate about different styles of rap e.g. gangsta rap and progressive rap.
Explaining Rap and Hip Hop from the light of the Gospel
The importance of thrills in Christian praise & worship music
The importance of soothing influence in Christian praise and worship music
The importance of Christian symbols and signs in dressing, communication, and the important of a Christian lifestyle as a worshiper of YHWH (values, language, and conduct)
Explain the difference between REALITY Rap and secular music (purpose, influence, and the underlying dangers)
Teach adults about youth and the community
Guide people to have a relationship with God
Transformation of life

<b>Group 4: Supporting and Advocating</b> (Micah 6:6-8; Amos 5:21-24; Matthew 7:7-12; Mark 12:28-34; Isaiah 65:17-25; Heb 13:1-9a, 16)
Redistributing the available resources with an aim of eliminating any noticeable disparity.
Redistributing material resources according to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The needs in areas unreasonably discriminated</li> <li>b. The needs in areas discriminated as a result of ignorance</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> The needs in discriminated as a result of unsettled conflicts (NB: You cannot teach the hungry and angry conscious person. For his/her attention you must first attend the injustice for the justice)</p>
Advocating or promoting their self-thought, self-plan, and achievements for the Church and community support by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting their idea of REALITY RAP</li> <li>• Promoting their REALITY RAP plan</li> <li>• Promoting their mission</li> <li>• Promoting individual plans and endeavors aimed at improving the socioeconomic status of youth and young adults.</li> </ul>
<b>Group 5: Empowering and facilitation</b> (James 3:1-17 and 2 Timothy 2:23-25 Psalm 19-10)
Empowering by designing a plan, giving responsibilities, and facilitating self-thought, self-plan, and self-help. Youth self-sufficiency is the focus. Designing a plan of responsibilities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Giving responsibilities accordingly</li> <li>b. Facilitating towards self-sufficiency</li> </ul>
Basing the ministry from the grass roots (bottom-top approach not top-bottom), on faith in Jesus Christ (not the “church”), and the Bible (not the “doctrines”). Building the ministry from the bottom up by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ensuring REALITY Rap is in interest of the majority in the Church</li> <li>b. Ensuring that REALITY Rap is in the interest of the Majority in the youth/young adults</li> </ul>
c. Having decision in facilitation and implementation from the REALITY Rap ministry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Having Bible (not ‘Church’) the source of guiding principles</li> <li>e. Having faith in Jesus Christ as the Key motivator</li> <li>f. Having the Holy Spirit as the dictator of situations (not people hidden in church doctrines, philosophies, and theologies)</li> </ul>
<b>Group 6: Eliminating the Generational Gap</b>
Reaching the youth and becoming one of them
Living with them and understanding issues of extreme diversity (Disagreeing facts between the young and the old, male and the female, leaders and the led, saved and the unsaved, etc.)
Reconciling by helping to bridge the gap between thoughts, convictions, plans, activities and expectations.
Reconciling by helping parties involved see areas which need acknowledgement, respect, and appreciation.
Reconciling by helping parties involved see areas which need change

## APPENDIX 4

### HEXAGON HINDRANCE TO CLUSTERS

**How can the music and culture of rap and hip-hop be used to unite and encourage Holy Temple Church youths and young adults to follow a holistic Christian life and worship in their communities?**

<b>Group 1: Division - Generational gap</b>
Neglected and isolated youths
Misunderstanding youths and the problems facing them (ignorance of contradictory facts between the young and the old, male and the female, leaders and the led, saved and the unsaved, etc.)
Conflict of thoughts, convictions, plans, activities, and expectations between youth and older members of the congregation.
Conflicts between parties involved (old and the young) and lack of <b>understanding areas</b> , which need acknowledgement, respect, and appreciation
Lack of <b>understanding areas</b> , which need acknowledgement, respect, and appreciation
Conflicts due to lack of <b>understanding areas</b> , which need change between the young and the old.
<b>Group 2: People's negative thinking</b>
Ignorance about the negative purpose, influence, and dangers of secular music and culture
secular music & culture.
Ignorance about the positive things in secular music and culture which the church can use to spread Christian faith
False teachings about positive things in secular music and culture
-False teaching about REALITY Rap
<b>Group 3: Lack of support in the people's socioeconomic needs</b>
Unfair redistribution of the available resources with noticeable disparities or disproportions due to discrimination, ignorance, and neglect
Needs and unsettled conflicts (NB: You cannot teach the hungry and angry conscious person. For his/her attention you must first attend to the injustice)
Lack of motivation to promote ideas of youth, plans, missions, and individual plans and endeavors aimed at improving socioeconomic status
<b>Group 4: People's reaction and protesting</b>
Poor attendance by the recipients
Poor commitment
Too much negative criticism
Low morale among the youth
Little or no achievement of change
Almost no difference (in 'status quo' – dead worship and a hypocritical lifestyle as secular culture engulfs youth in the church)
<b>Group 5: Showing one-sidedness</b>
Lack of leadership skills
Unwillingness to participate

Cliques
Lack of understanding diversity
Lack of Understanding
Lack of knowledge about cultural context
<b>Group 6: Not Seeking God</b>
Lack of Wisdom
Unwilling spirit
Lack of knowledge about God

## APPENDIX 5

### CASUAL LOOP ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1

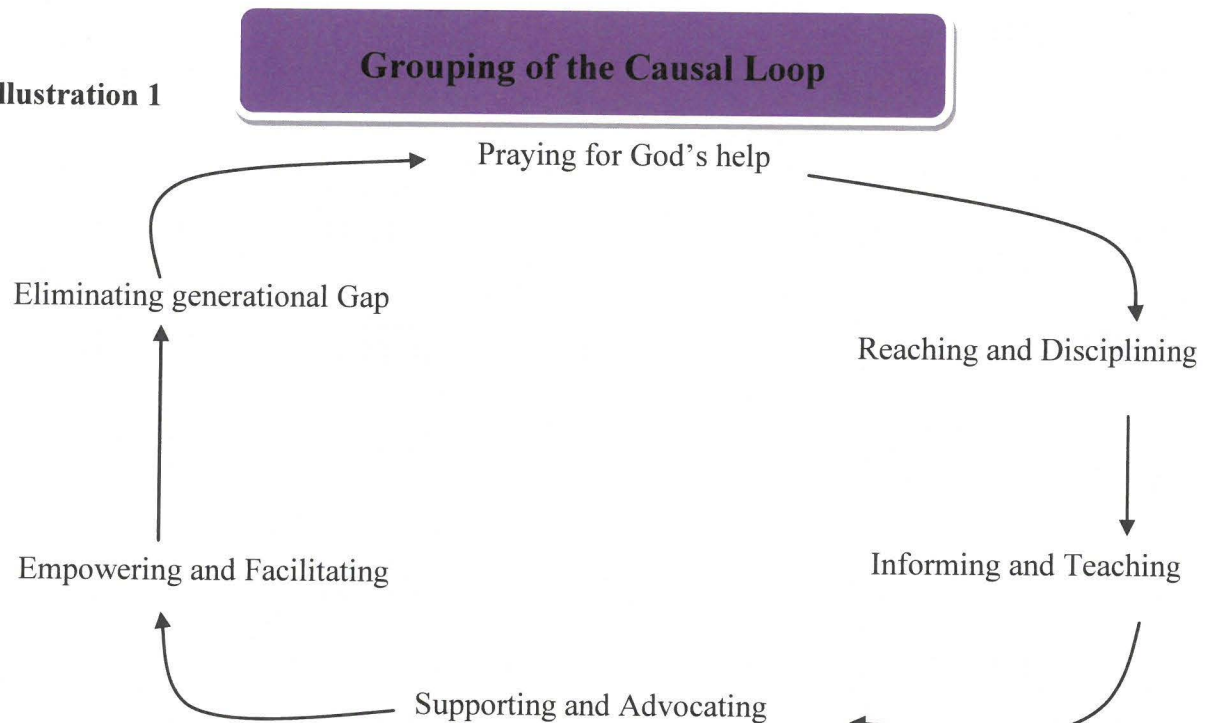


Illustration 2

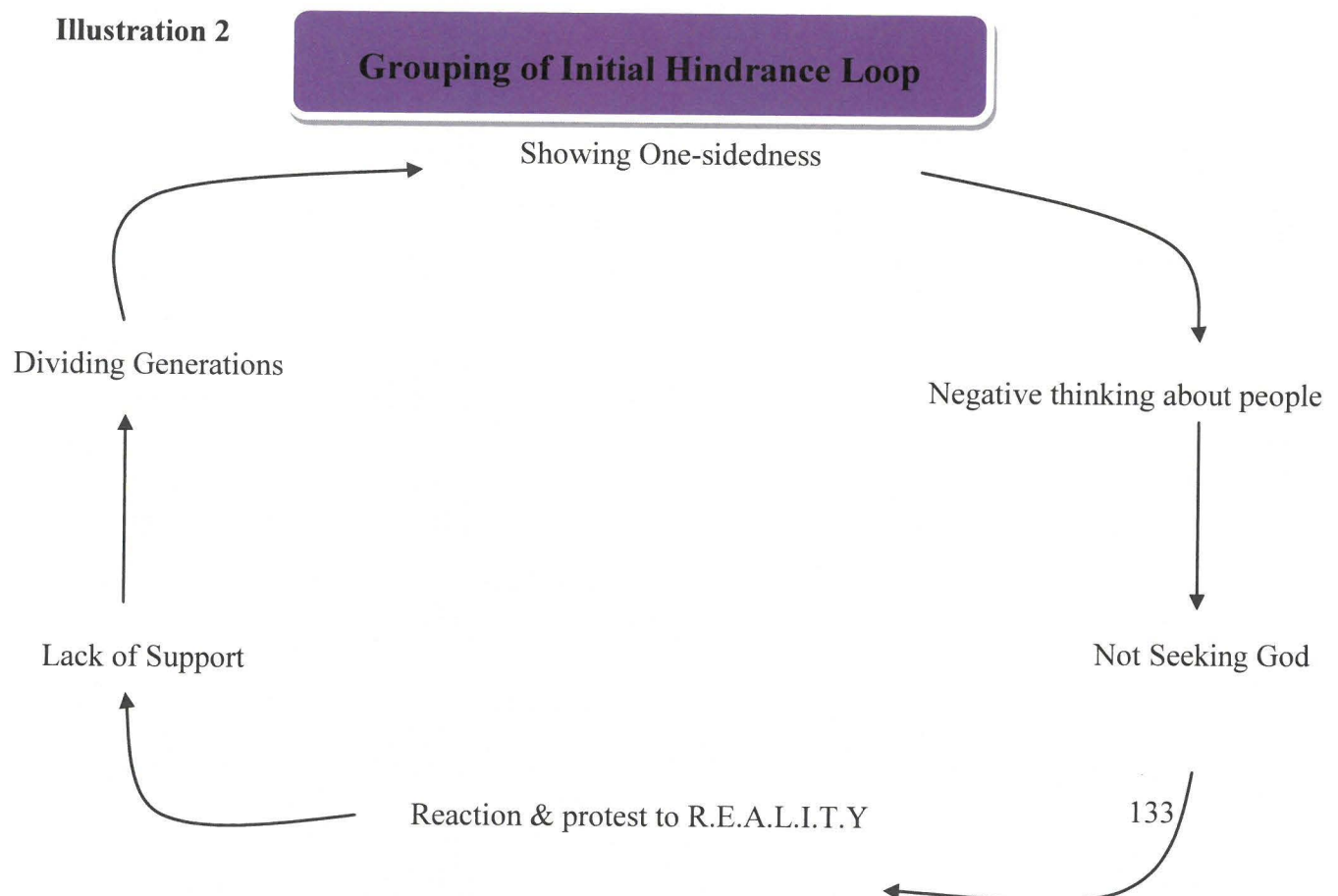
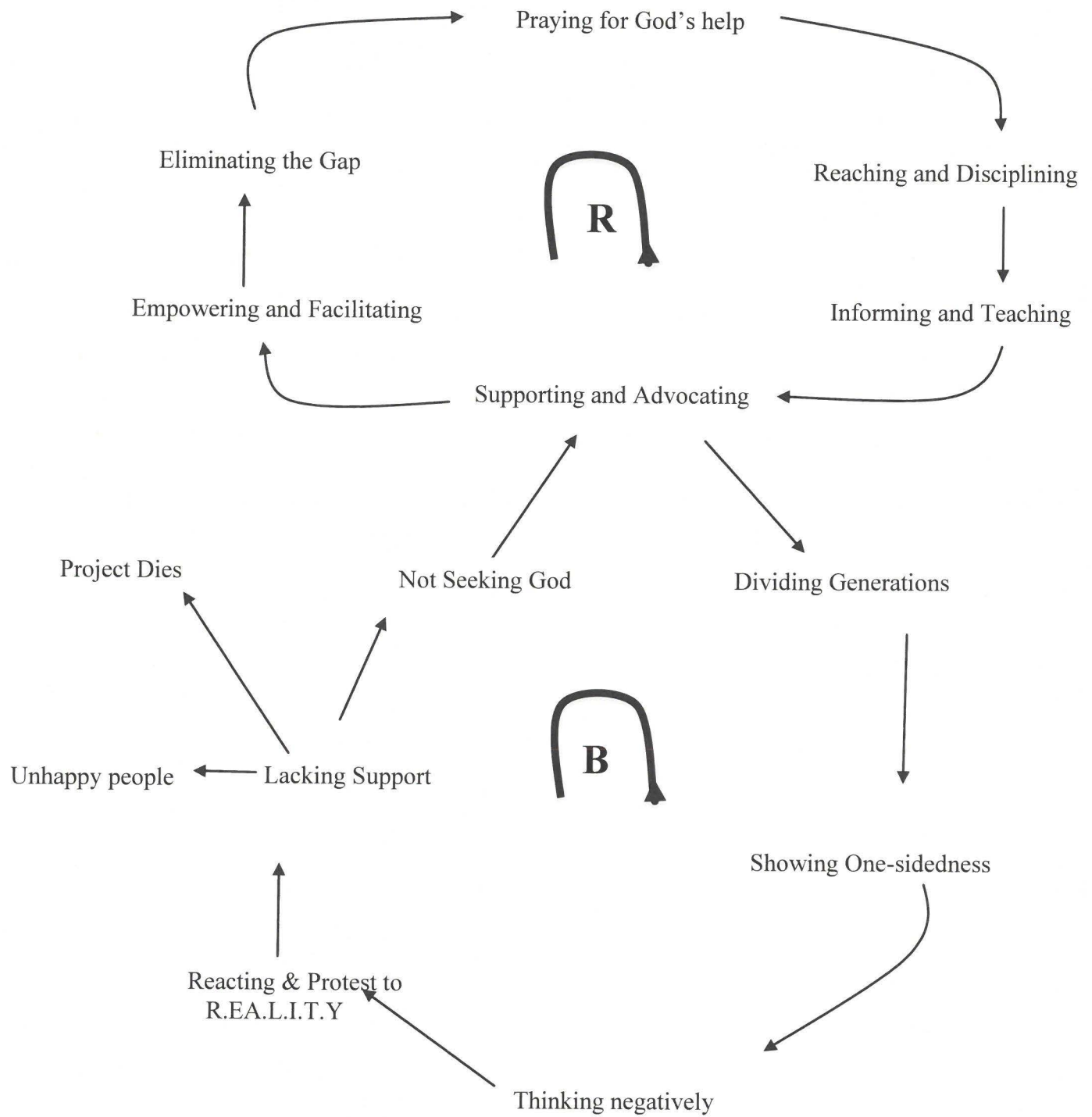


Illustration 3

## Grouping of the Causal Loop



## APPENDIX: 6

### SAMPLE PROPOSAL

#### Basic Description

1. R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. (Renewing Entire Attitude to Life Individually Transforming Yourself) Raps is two, three- day workshops designed to create a transformative and renewed church community. The goal of these workshops is to bridge the gap between youth and older members of the church through the integration of traditional Christian, gospel, Black spiritual music, rap music, and scripture.
2. A Renewed intergenerational worship experience within the church community will serve to help lesson divisions both within the Christian church community and within the wider community. Rap music describes and laments today's socio-political injustice issues. These laments and prophetic insights combined with sound theological doctrine are enlightening and transformative. The answer is to theologically engage the youth where they are and this engagement can be achieved through Christian rap music and worship. Christian rap music allows the youth to have a greater ownership within the church worship experience; these experiences will result in a wider Christian social evolution of individual and moral consciousness.

#### Monthly Timeline

Activities	Dates	Comments
R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. Raps Seminar (Renewing Entire Attitudes to Life Individually Transforming Yourself) Two Seminars on Worship, Theology and The Art	R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. Raps Seminars' Tentative Dates September 2012 / April 2013	Proposed Project Description
R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. Raps Committee Meeting	January 2012	
Advertising to local public and private schools, community centers, and local churches will begin through mailings and internet registration. Hire part-time musicians to begin workshop preparation. Solicit workshop presenters and facilitators.	Beginning May 2012 for Fall 2012 Seminar	Adult Church volunteers and Musicians will assist in the coordination and implementation of workshops.
Confirm registration of participants	June/ July 2012	
First R.E.A.L.I.T.Y Raps Seminar	September 2012	First of Two Integrative Christian Scriptural/ Rap Music Seminars.

Mid-Year Committee Meeting/ Report	December 2012	
R.E.A.L.I.T.Y Raps Committee Meeting	January 2013	
Advertising to local public and private schools, community centers, and local churches will begin through mailings and internet registration. Hire part-time musicians to begin workshop preparation. Solicit workshop presenters and facilitators.	Beginning February 2013 for Spring 2013 Seminar	Adult Church volunteers and Musicians will assist in the coordination and implementation of workshops.
Confirm registration of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Seminar participants	March 2013	
2 <sup>nd</sup> R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. Raps Seminar	April 2013	Second of Two Integrative Christian Scriptural/ Rap Music Seminars
Final Committee Report /Meeting	May 2013	
Final Report	July, 2013	

### **Community**

3. Since the mid-eighteen hundreds the Black Church's example of unwavering faith in God has helped communities withstand a history of social disenfranchisement, economic repression and educational oppression. Holy Temple Church's mission is to continue to provide this example of faith, strength, and unity not only for its congregation but for also its surrounding community. R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. Raps' purpose is to further the Black church's tradition of fostering community solidarity by providing the younger generation with a spiritual and prophetic Christian voice. In addition, the Seminars will provide insight into how other churches can employ new worship techniques to create and renew their own understanding of faith, praise, and worship.
4. A working collaboration among all age groups within the congregation is the primary focus in the implementation and preparation of this proposal. The Seminars' purposes are to provide practical methods and concepts that will mend intergenerational divisions within the church and the community. By intertwining sound theological doctrine and scripture with Christian Rap Music, the foundation of God's Word becomes instilled within the hearts of the next generation. The Seminar will also bring the Holy Temple Church congregation together with other Christian denominations and faith traditions to begin a process of healing and unity.
5. The congregational health of any church institution depends upon all members combining their individual spiritual talents to function together as a whole body. The survival of a church body depends upon the youth as much as its older members. This seminar will empower and allow active youth participation in the extolment of



scriptures while allowing collaboration with older members. This youthful empowerment will then serve to nourish and strengthen the foundational traditions of the Black church while rejuvenating the worship experience for the whole congregation; as well as creating unity in denominational and inter-faith communities of worship. Moreover, this unity will allow growth in the church today and the future.

6. The Seminars' young adult workshop leader, H. Ian Harris has over ten years of experience working with urban and inner city youth. Harris earned his English degree from Morehouse College and is currently a MFA Candidate in film production at Boston University. He has many published articles and has lectured frequently on the Hip-Hop culture. I will recruit two youth ministry lecturers from Gordon Conwell Theological School who have a combined experience of 17 years working with urban and inner city youth and communities. The other two individuals are music professors from Berklee School of Music. These individuals will focus on the development of Christian Rap music. These individuals will be a part of the four person consulting team for the Seminars' workshop development. Holy Temple Church's Minister of music will facilitate a hymns and spiritual workshop on the history of Traditional Christian, gospel music, and Spirituals. Pastor Tommy Kyllonen, also known as, Urban D from The Crossover Church of Tampa, Florida has several years of engaging multiracial and multi-ethnic groups in authentic biblical worship "using a urban street style with a holy spin." In addition, an invitation is extended to Dr. Barbara A. Holmes, Vice President of Academic Affairs/Dean at Memphis Theological Seminary to be a guest worship speaker on the prophetic nature of Christian Rap Music. All workshop presenters and materials must be approved and viewed by the Seminars' committee members. In addition, the project director will report the status of the R.E.A.L.I.T.Y Raps Seminars progress on a monthly basis directly to the Holy Temple Church pastor and trustee board members.

### **Theological Reflection**

7. Authentic worship allows an individual to connect to the presence of God through the Holy Spirit. This connection is experienced when people are allowed to worship in the presence of God within the context of their own culture and personhood. In this definition of an authentic worship experience the individual is free to experience the realm of spiritual divinity by engaging spiritual gifts unique to his or her own community and self. Therefore, authentic worship allows one to freely worship and encounter God in a way that is both genuine and real. Moreover, authentic worship allows one to experience depth and substance in worship. Christian Rap music exposes a new generation drawn to depth in music, prayers, and sermons reflecting the current communication revolution. This new generation still wants to know what "God has to say to them about the world and self. The clarion call of the eternal message delivered in the tone, tempo, and format of the international phenomenon of

rap offers this new generation an authentic experience of worship, redemption, and deliverance.

8. Christian Rap music delivers the gospel to its listeners through an ancient practice that has been modernized and updated. In the African culture ancient griots brought their ancestor's religious stories to life through rhythmic storytelling, drumming, and song just as the psalmist lamented, loved, and worshipped God through poetry and song in Biblical scripture. Today the griots and psalmists are the "rappers" and the purpose is the same. R.E.A.L.I.T.Y Raps Seminars will seek to encourage and foster a love of God by teaching biblical stories and the Gospel message of Christ through the internationally and authentic music of Christian rap music.
9. All participants will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of how simple yet spiritually enriching the word of God remains even while voiced through today's modern and prophetic griots. Spreading the word of God through this style of musical worship will enable youth to have ownership and an active role in fulfilling the great commandment. Older members witnessing their youth actively and enthusiastically involved in worship will testify to the power of Christian Rap and this resulting testimony will bridge intergenerational divisions. In addition, young and old will combine their spiritual unique gifts in the song and praise of God's love in an intergenerational choir displaying Christian rap and traditional gospel music.
10. REALITY Raps will include a panel discussion at each workshop. These panel discussions will consist of Preachers, theologians, and Christian rap artists who are currently involved in the Christian rap music community. Panel discussions will aid in teaching the history of Christian hymns, gospel music, Black spirituals, and their evolution into Christian rap music. The two prong goals of these discussions are: One, to provide resources, mentoring, and guidance to rap artists and youth who are interested in creating Christian rap music but have not been trained or oriented to the historical foundation of traditional Christian and Black worship music. Two, to provide sound theological doctrine to those already involved in creating Christian Rap. Music directors will teach by intertwining the historical and spiritual sacredness of traditional, spiritual, and gospel Christian music and text in the package of Christian rap. They will demonstrate how this new form of sacred worship can and must retain its ancestral and sacred Christian spirituality. There will be specific examples modeling how Christian rap music can be used in a Christian worship service without diluting the essence of the gospel. In addition, we will have congregational building exercises to maintain congregational intergenerational unity.

### **Beyond The Project**

11. Facilitators of R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. Raps will create an online forum for participants to dialogue with each other on the success of the Seminar's objectives. The forum will seek to assess the success of the R.E.A.L.I.T.Y. raps Seminars by having participating congregations report increases or decreases in youth participation within their church

communities. We will also measure the number of congregations who accept this form of integrated musical worship into their liturgical schedules. Moreover, the participants will present a small intergenerational concert to the wider community in order to celebrate and exhibit their resulting learning experiences.

12. Christian rap music and worship that is rooted in Christian faith and scripture enables spiritual growth in youth and young adults and can (with further instruction from older and more mature Christians) help to develop an understanding of how the gospel message informs and transforms their lives.
13. *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” Proverbs 22.6.* This proverb communicates the vision behind REALITY Raps. The long-term project goal is to encourage youth to become more active within the church community. Urban youth often lack guidance, which can be provided by the church. This project will help to foster trust between the neighboring community youth and the church community. Youths need to believe that their neighborhood church will open its arms to their ideas and themselves. Once this trust is established, the church will be able to positively influence their lives and help them to build a moral understanding of God’s love in their lives. This influence will help to develop and guide them into becoming fully functional Christ led adults, transforming not only their lives but also future generations. In order to effectively begin this transformation in the lives of the youth and the greater community it is imperative that the spiritually mature members of Holy Temple church - as well as all Churches - begin to help our youth channel their spiritual gifts into the service of God. Many youth in the urban and inner city relate and identify with Rap music. Holy Temple Church wants these youth to share their personal experiences with our project and we seek to encourage them to become a welcoming presence in our congregation. We seek to use this forum as an initial way of reaching out to the youth in the church and it is surrounding community to expand and create necessary developmental and Christian youth leadership programs. In the past and even now Holy Temple Church has served as the voice of the needs and concerns of its surrounding inner city community. We believe it is imperative for our congregation and other congregations in these communities adopt modern forms of worship expressions or face eventual extinction of both the church and its communities. All congregations are renewed through the youthful spirit of worship; we believe that Holy Temple, other area churches, and the world can dramatically change from a movement to bring youth actively back into the worship experience.
14. The Seminars’ resulting intergenerational “Dare to Dream Youth Ministry” choir, through its participation in local church services and events -in a variety of venues- will inform and inspire area congregations, pastors, community youth and others by its concrete message of hope, vitality and unity. Reciprocal ecumenical relationships across denominations can be formed directly through such interaction. In addition a follow up Internet community consisting of the participants, pastors, theologians, and music directors will allow congregations seeking assistance to dialogue and also discuss the pros and cons of the Seminar’s concepts.

## GLOSSARY

**African Diaspora-** the spreading of various African cultural characteristics throughout the world, both directly (via migration) and indirectly (via slavery)

**Battle-** a competition between DJ's, graffiti artists, b-boys/b-girls, or MCs and their peers. The competition can be formal for a prize, but most often it is informal for no prize other than pride.

**Battling-** the act of competing in a battle.

**Beats-** most often used to describe an instrumental recording of rhythms used by MCs to rap over. The term is also used to describe drum-based patterns.

**Breakin'-** a particular type of dance style, most often performed during the break of a song (hence the name of the dance) by the b-boys/b-girls. Dance is one of the four foundational elements of Hip Hop Culture.

**Churched-**affiliated with a church

**Flow-** a continuous delivery of rhymes by an MC.

**Gangsta Rap-** the hard-core music influenced by the actions and lifestyles of gangstas.

**Griot-** a name most often associated with the West African poet/musician who carries and reveals the local history of a community through oral tradition. The term has been borrowed by other cultures, including Black Americans to speak of individuals who retain the legacy and heritage of local, regional, and cultural communities through oral tradition.

**Hip hop-** the musical expression of Hip Hop Culture. Although it is often differentiated from rap music, it is similar to rap in its use of DJs, MCs, and producers. Usually lowercase (hip hop).

**Hip Hop Culture-** Hip Hop Culture began with four foundational elements used by inner city youth, first in New York's boroughs, to express themselves. Built on the elements of DJ, MC, graffiti, and dance (including breakin', popin', and others), Hip Hop Culture has continued as a global movement still retaining the importance of social conscious and political, economic, and cultural engagement.

**Hip Hop Generation-** the term used to describe a generation of young people born between 1965 and 1984.

**Hip-hop-** term used by KRS-One and the Temple of Hip-hop to distinguish the cultural and activist aspects of the culture rather than just the musical genre. They close it up as one word but often capitalize it.

**Inner city-** the poorer, less prestigious areas within a major city.

**Latchkey kids-** the growing population of children who return from school to a home of limited supervision, if any, due to the work schedule of their parent (s).

**MC-** a master of ceremony, or “emcee.” The term also describes a foundational element of Hip Hop Culture.

**Misogyny-** an exaggerated aversion to women or hate of women.

**Old school-** the style of Hip Hop (particularly rap music) dating back to the 1970s and lasting through the mid-1980s.

**Rap-** rhythmic speaking or rhyming, either to a beat (that is, a recorded track, human beat box, and the like) or a cappella.

**Rap music-** the music of Hip Hop Culture. Traditionally, rap music consisted of the combined talents and creativity of both an MC and a DJ, but most current rap music does not involve a DJ. This genre of music consists of many local and regional styles as well as different philosophical approaches and includes gangsta rap, East Coast rap, West Coast rap, southern rap, and conscious rap to name a few.

**Rappin’-** the act of speaking rhythmically over music or other rhythmic accompaniment such as hand claps, beat boxing, and the like.

**Unchurched-** not belonging to or connected with a church

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## **VITA**

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